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SEPTEMBER 2015 #132



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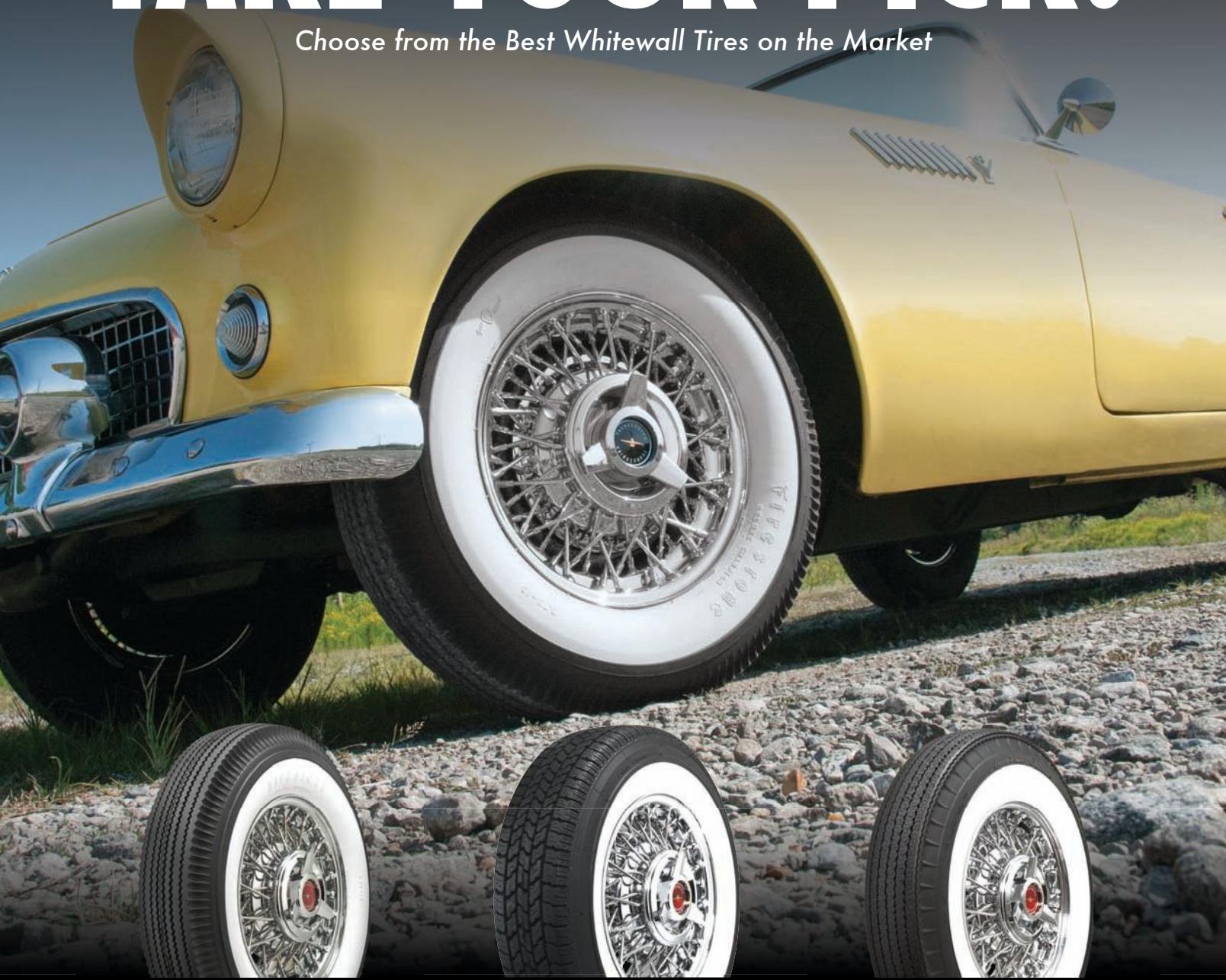


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BUILT
Ford
TOUGH

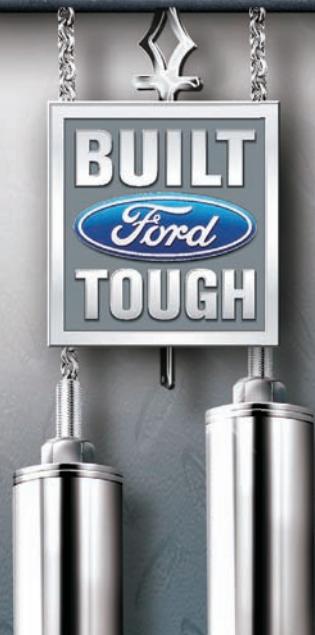
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why historic
hot rods don't
get the respect
they deserve is
because many
people ... don't
know what they
are looking at.



Hot Rods at the Concours

Although I'm a purist at heart, I must admit that I derive great pleasure seeing historic hot rods on a concours show field. While I completely understand why many of our readers dislike hot rods in general, for me, seeing a well-thought-out hot rod design that is both unique in its styling and creativity, and in the execution of its fabrication and various details, is always an inspiring experience. And it isn't any different or less noteworthy than seeing a coachbuilt Classic; at least it shouldn't be. After all, they're all hand-built automobiles just the same; only their age and pedigree differ.

But before I go any further, let's first define what makes an historic hot rod. In short, it's a car that had been modified—usually extensively—back in the 1940s, '50s or early '60s. They were built with a combination of original-equipment parts and period aftermarket speed equipment and, of course, many handmade components and body panels. Some earned notoriety by being featured in the hot rod magazines of that era. And if a car won a significant exhibition, such as the Oakland Roadster Show, which is the hot rod equivalent to the Pebble Beach Concours, then it's very special, indeed.

Some of America's historically significant hot rods include the So-Cal Speed Shop's three-window '34 Ford coupe made famous by Alex Xydias, Doane Spencer's '32 roadster, and the radically chopped '34 Ford coupe that the Pierson Brothers crafted. All historically important cars, they defined an era and culture the way few automobiles ever have.

The primary reason why historic hot rods don't get the respect they deserve is mainly because many people, upon seeing one, truly don't know what they are looking at. They are blinded by prejudice. Many believe that a car has to sport a fancy badge from an exclusive European marque, not a Blue Oval or Bowtie emblem, to be appreciated and valued. They also believe that an exotic overhead-cam powerplant makes a car, but a pedestrian Ford flathead that's been modified does not. Little do they know just how exotic—and valuable—those Ardun, Grancor or Winfield cylinder heads are.

Although I'm a huge enthusiast of Italy's carrozzerias, with Touring being my favorite



coachbuilder, followed by Zagato and Farina, Switzerland-based Graber, and England's Carbodies, builders who crafted the striking Airline Coupes for Jaguar and MG, among others, I equally appreciate the design and construction of distinctive hot rods. Each is a piece of America's automotive history, and they need to be treasured and preserved much the way one would a prewar Duesenberg or Pierce-Arrow, Alfa Romeo or Delage. This is why hot rods with a pedigree are now being recognized at the prestigious Pebble Beach Concours, Amelia Island and other such lofty shows.

In the not-too-distant future, I hope to see on the concours circuit many of today's noteworthy and extraordinary hot rods that are being created throughout this great country of ours. They are being built by contemporary American carrozzerias, except their last names don't end in a vowel.

One of those artisans who I admire most is Steve Moal, and his carrozzeria-inspired creations are simply breathtaking. The blue Gatto that he built rivals anything that Ferrari and Maserati produced. Other scratch-built Moal creations include the '36 Ford Aerocoupe, the Torpedo, and the matchless 1941 Chrysler Aghassi Royale roadster—all truly spectacular automobiles.

Then there are the imitable creations of Ken Posie, whose 1935 Ford Aeroliner and 1937 Studebaker Extremeliner set new standards for dazzling designs and excellent craftsmanship.

Just like the extravagant coachbuilt shape of a Figoni & Falaschi Delahaye or the flamboyant Cadillac that Jacques Saoutchik created back in 1948, yesterday's, as well as today's, custom-crafted hot rods need to be recognized for their incredible design, outstanding craftsmanship and originality, and not be looked down upon simply because they are hot rods.

The bottom line, if the Dubonnet Xenia Streamliner that Jean Andreau designed and Saoutchik crafted on a Hispano-Suiza chassis can grace the concours lawns, then so should coachbuilt hot rods. After all, they really are one and the same. ☀

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Youth Initiative



THE AACA AND GREAT RACE ARE ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGH A NEW initiative, awarding three \$1,000 X-Cup Grants for the 2015 Great Race. Teams from Alfred State College in New York (1953 Power Wagon), McPherson College in Kansas (1957 Ford Fairlane) and Ponca City High School in Oklahoma (1956 Buick convertible) competed in this year's event, which took place June 20-28 and ran from Kirkwood, Missouri, to Santa Monica, California. Student team members who were not AACA members were also given a one-year AACA student membership. Jeff Mahl, the head of the AACA Youth Development team, says the element of competition has been an effective way to engage the next generation in the field of classic cars. X-Cup teams applying for a grant in 2016 must be sponsored by a recognized educational institution. For more information about The Great Race and the X-Cup division, visit www.greatrace.com/x-cup. For additional coverage, search our blog at www.hemmings.com.

Bird Pageant

This year's 42nd annual "Pageant of the Thunderbird" will take place in Anaheim, California, September 19. Hosted by The Earlybirds of Southern California and the Thunderbirds of Southern California, this is the longest-running all-Thunderbird show in the SoCal area. The event will be held at Twila Reid Park and is open to all Thunderbirds 1955-2005, original, modified or custom. Visit www.thunderbirdssocal.com/forms/2015Pageant.pdf for registration and a full schedule of events.



Des Moines Draw

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 13, AS THE DES MOINES Concours d'Elegance will take place around the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. The event is open to the public at no charge, and more than 100 classic cars are expected to be on display. This year's classes will include Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg; Factory-built Performance Automobiles; Highway Patrol Vehicles; The Little Cars; and Race Cars; as well as the usual annual classes of vintage domestic and imported automobiles and motorcycles. If you're going to be in the Midwest this September, visit www.desmoinesconcours.com for more information.

SEPTEMBER

Calendar

3-6 • Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Festival

Auburn, Indiana • 260-925-3600

www.acdfestival.org

6 • Sumter Swap Meet

Bushnell, Florida • 800-438-8559

www.sumterswapmeet.com

11-13 • Springfield Swap Meet & Car Show

Springfield, Ohio • 937-376-0111

ohioswapmeet.com

13 • AACA Sugar Loaf Region Car Show

Urbana, Maryland • 301-662-0103

www.sugarloafmountainaaca.org

19-20 • Michigan Antique Festival

Midland, Michigan • 989-687-9001

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19-20 • Fall Auto/Truck Show

Medina, New York • 585-798-0445

23-26 • Petit Jean Fall Swap Meet

Morrilton, Arkansas • 501-727-5427

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24-27 • Charlotte AutoFair

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25-27 • Englishtown Fall Swap & Show

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www.etownraceway.com

25-27 • Fall Jefferson Car Show & Swap Meet

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www.madisonclassics.com

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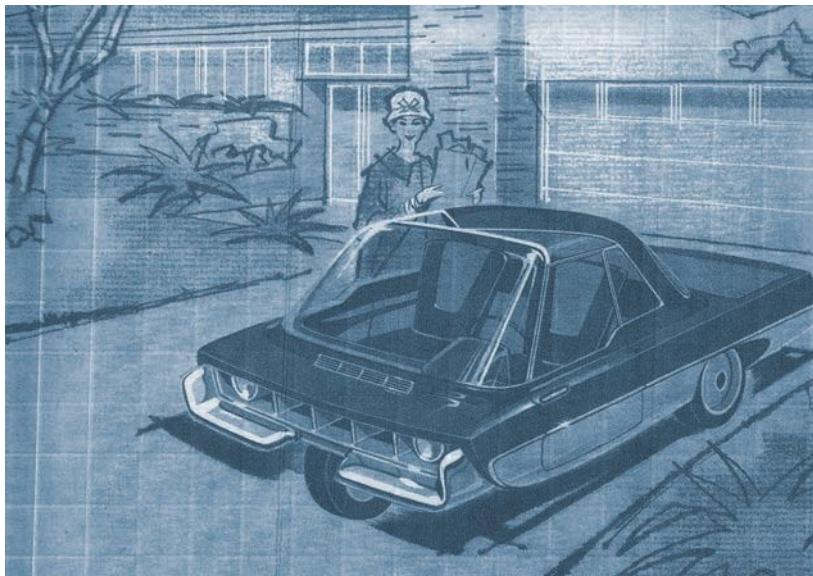
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Onan's Three-Wheeler

IN RESPONSE TO A LONG-AGO MENTION OF ONAN ENGINES, LOYAL READER

Lawrence Kuhn sent us a copy of an Onan ad from 1961 showing a rendering of a three-wheeled "suburban shopping car."

Given that the company specialized in smaller engines just about right to power a small runabout, the little car could have opened up a whole new market for the engine builder, which at the time focused on providing powerplants for golf carts, welders, farm machinery, generators and compressors, among many other industrial applications. And if Onan didn't have any experience building cars, its parent company at the time, Studebaker-Packard Corporation, did.

But it was all just a tease. Just as soon as Onan raises the possibility, the ad notes that Onan wasn't, nor would it be, building such a car.

Which Way to the World's Fair?

DONALD SOAT OF JACKSON, MICHIGAN, SAID HE BOUGHT THIS 1954 FORD FOR the used car lot he ran, Suburban Motors, in early 1966 from a salvage dealer in Bluefield, West Virginia, who claimed that Ford Motor Company itself built the car from all-new parts and that Ford displayed it at the 1964 New York World's Fair.

"It drew crowds of people pulling into the dealership just to see this car," Donald wrote. "My brother, Bud, and I would drive it down the road. When you came to a stop sign and put it in reverse the 'back' headlights would come on. The folks behind you would turn around and take off a different direction."

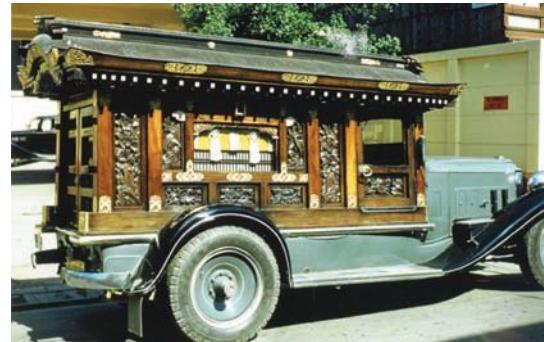
Donald said he sold the car at auction in 1969 and hasn't seen it since.



Nippon Funeral Packards

ONE WOULD THINK FUNERARY CEREMONIES TO BE THE most well-established and thus unalterable of humankind's rituals, but plenty of cultures around the world adapted the automobile to them in short order, something we couldn't help noticing when looking over these photos that reader Tom Ballard of Glendale, Arizona, sent.

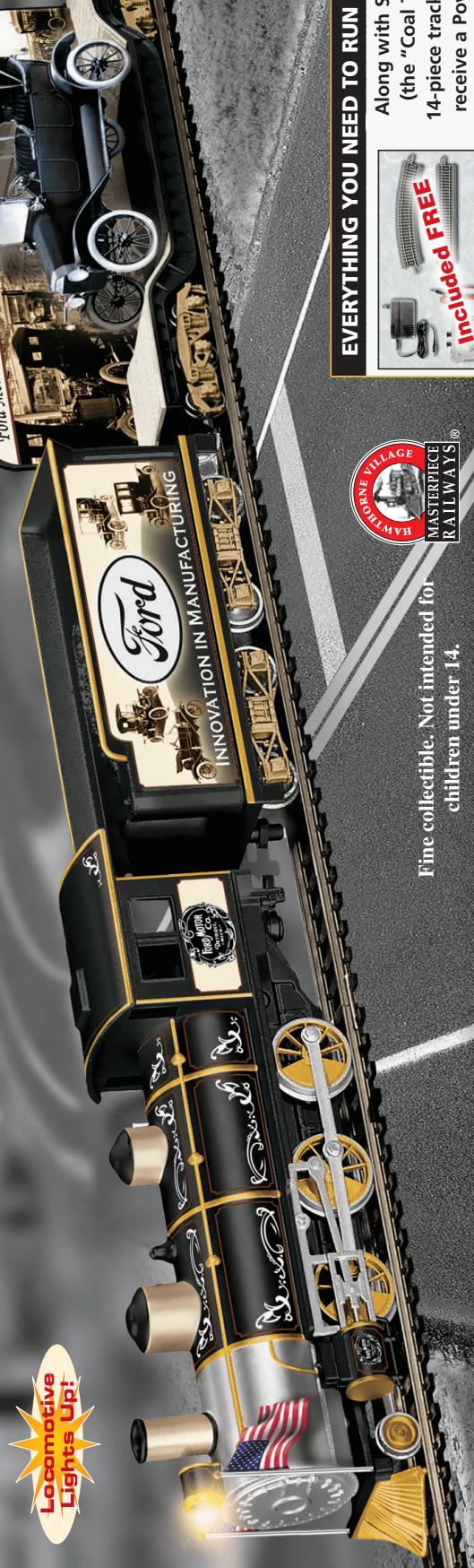
According to Tom, his aunt took the photos while stationed in Osaka in the mid-Fifties. "Very interesting and different," Tom wrote. Certainly ornate and meticulously crafted. Identifying the Packards should be simple enough, but who was the craftsman (or craftsmen) that bodied them into hearses? And do any examples like these—if not these exact cars—still exist?



Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car? Let us know. Photographs, commentary, questions and answers should be submitted to Lost & Found, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201 or emailed to dstrohl@hemmings.com. For more Lost & Found, visit <http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found/>.

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Jersey Jamboree

THIS YEAR'S WILDWOOD FALL BOARDWALK CLASSIC IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE SEPTEMBER 24-27. An auction will run at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood, New Jersey, from the 24th-26th. The auction preview will be that Thursday, and spectators are admitted at no charge. For information, consignment deals and details, please contact 609-729-7646 or visit www.wildwoodmotorevents.com.



Nocona News

VICARI'S NOCONA AUCTION TOOK PLACE IN

May and saw 100 cars sell for a total exceeding \$1.8 million. Some of the highlights included a 1953 Packard Caribbean convertible, which served some of its life as a Peruvian embassy car and sold for \$61,000; a heavily optioned 1962 Chrysler 300H convertible, which brought a final bid of \$54,000; and a 1939 Cadillac Series 61 Touring Sedan, with only 19,500 miles, that hammered at \$37,000. For a full rundown of Vicari's Nocona results, visit their website at www.vicariauction.com.

AUCTION PROFILE

THE NOMAD WAGON DEBUTED IN 1955 with a production run of 8,386 units. It was a fancier station wagon than the two-door Townsman, but could still perform like a workhorse when called upon. The Nomad's distinctive rear design featured curved-glass windows, which helped eliminate blind spots, and its front end had eyebrow trim that blended into the side trim.

This particular Nomad had seen few miles since it was restored and featured power steering and brakes and the standard 265-cu.in. 162hp V-8, with a three-speed manual transmission. The interior featured the correct waffle patterned red-and-white vinyl, with a Wonder Bar signal-seeking AM radio, electric clock, heater/defroster and E-Z-Eye tinted glass. Nomads are getting harder to find, so the buyer was wise to move on this one.



CAR 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air Nomad
AUCTIONEER RM Sotheby's
LOCATION Fort Worth, Texas
DATE May 2, 2015
LOT NUMBER 203

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12 • Dan Kruse Classics

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16-19 • Mecum

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24-26 • Barrett-Jackson

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24-26 • Wildwood Motor Events

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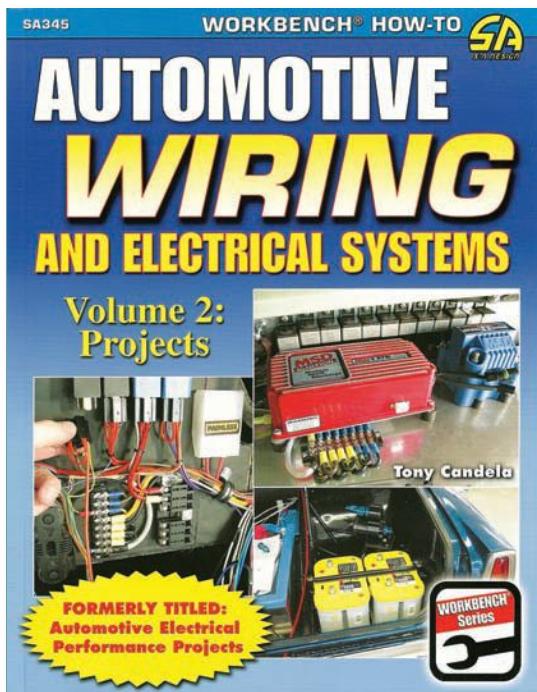


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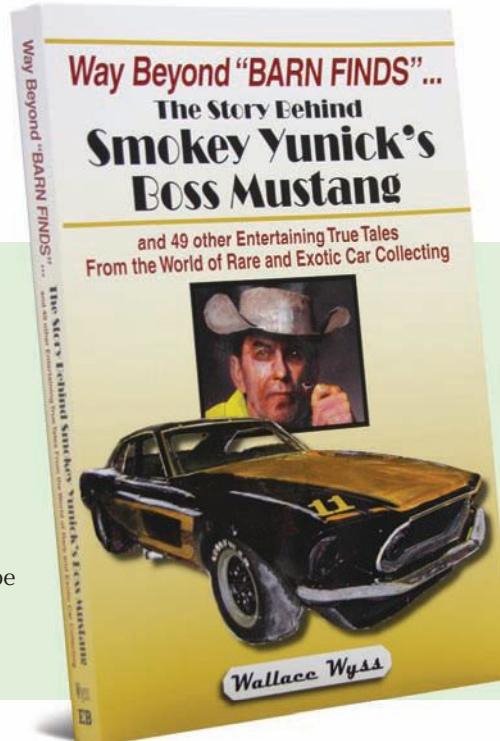


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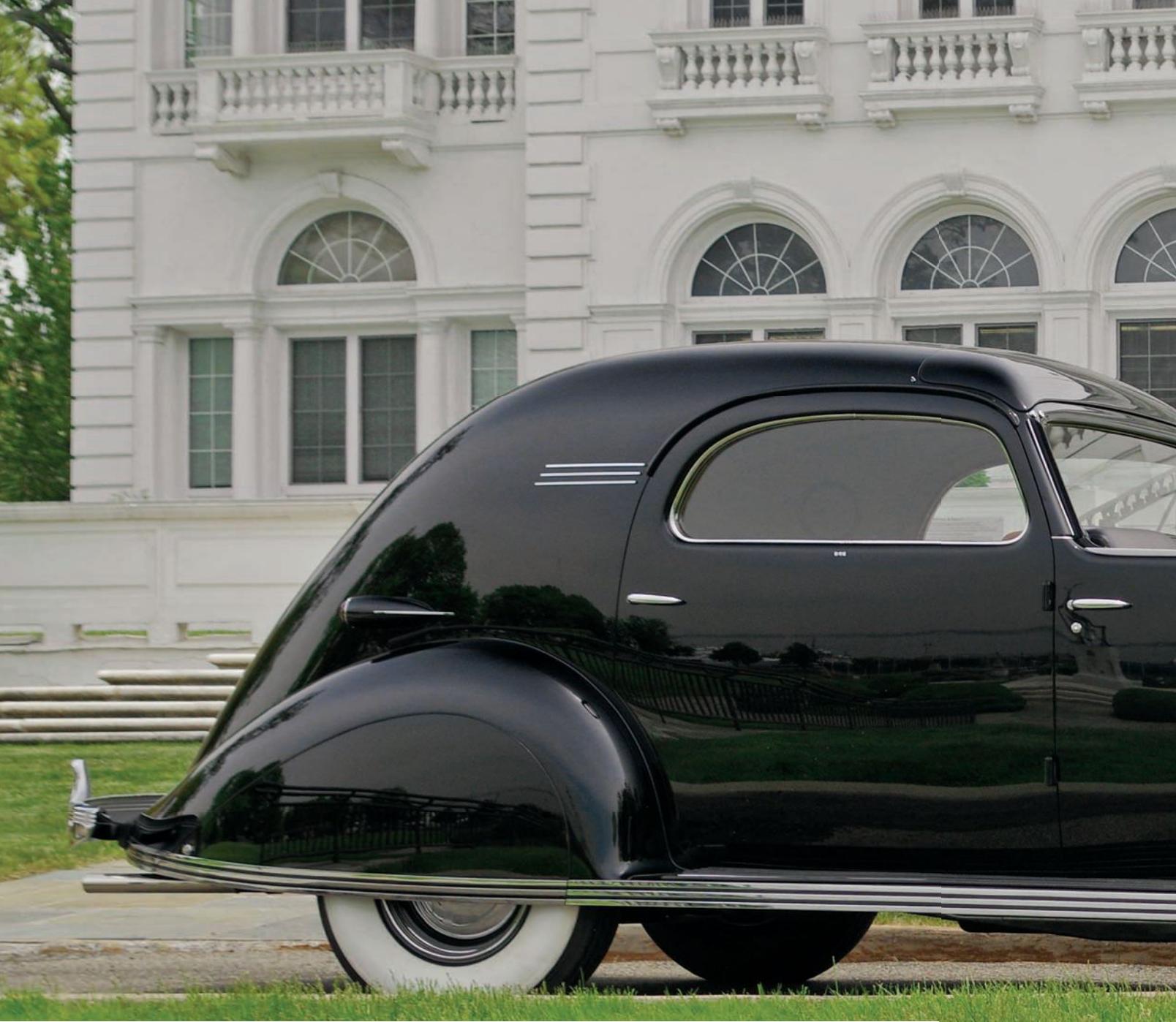
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Chrysler's Chrysler

Uncovering and restoring the 1937 Imperial C-15 limousine that was custom crafted by LeBaron for Mrs. Chrysler

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Every odyssey into history benefits from the kind of plot twists you'd find in a good detective story, be it from Dashiell Hammett, James Ellroy or Joseph Wambaugh. The narrative thread moves in unpredictable ways. You can start out with one objective and find yourself confronted by another goal or an unexpected prize.



That's what happened to Howard Kroplick when he thought he was researching a museum exhibit.

Instead, he stumbled upon a car that, for some time, nobody really seemed to want. Hard to figure, given that it was known to be the personal car of Walter P. Chrysler, or one he had commissioned as a present for his wife, Della. Specifically, it's a 1937 Chrysler Imperial C-15 seven-passenger limousine with town car coachwork by LeBaron, absolutely one of a kind and believed to be the first automobile ever built with spring-loaded power windows and door locks. And Howard found it purely by accident. The subsequent journey took him to the show fields of Pebble Beach, Amelia Island and elsewhere. It's a trip that's happily continuing.

Howard is a ranking automotive collector and historian on New York's Long Island, perhaps best known for his acquisition and restoration of the 1909 Alco racing car, the *Black Beast*, which contested the first Indianapolis 500 in 1911, in addition



A regal car photographed in regal surroundings, at Walter P. Chrysler's mansion on Long Island Sound in Kings Point, New York.



The tastefully trimmed interior gives no hint as to the complexity of this restoration. The body's ash framing had to be replaced. Yes, the clock on the dashboard not only works, but keeps time reliably. Round knobs are radio controls. Pushbuttons raise and lower the town car's glass divider. Knob beneath dash ahead of shifter activates overdrive. Note the sunburst pattern on the speedometer.

to winning the 1909 and 1910 Vanderbilt Cup races. He has also done extensive research on the early Vanderbilt Cup races and the Long Island Motor Parkway. It was that role that first brought him into contact with Walter P.'s Chrysler, a car that he was unaware even existed.

"That was fascinating," says Howard. "I was a research volunteer at the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum when I was doing work on my book about the Vanderbilt Cup races. I had no idea this car existed. I had no idea the museum owned it. I'd never seen it. Nobody at the museum talked about it. And then in 2010, I was putting together an exhibit for another Long Island museum, the Cradle of Aviation in Garden City, involving the *Black Beast*. The curator said the *Black Beast* was wonderful, but it would be better if the exhibit had a second car that was actually associated with these historic Long Island races."

The Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum, Mansion and Planetarium in Centerport, Long Island, has several cars in its collection, one of which was owned by race founder William

K. Vanderbilt Jr. Howard asked the museum's staff whether they had a car that was appropriate for his display at the Cradle of Aviation, and they suggested a 1909 REO that ran in a Cup-associated race. They told him it was in one of the museum complex's outbuildings.

"So, I go into the building's garage, and there's this beautiful 1909 REO," Howard recalls. "I'm looking at it, and in the rear of the building, I spot this big, black car with its hood up. I asked them what it was, and they said, 'Oh, that's a Chrysler. You don't want a Chrysler.' And I asked them, what kind of Chrysler is that? It doesn't look like any Chrysler I ever saw. And they said, 'That's because it was specially built for Walter P. Chrysler.'"

Howard was shocked on a number of levels, not the least of which was his amazement that an obvious one-off car with a ton of history had been sitting there for decades, unattended and unrestored. The museum staff told him it wasn't part of their regular collection and they were planning to sell it. That was all Howard needed to hear. After the elder Chryslers' deaths, the LeBaron limousine was inherited by their daughter, Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. It later passed into the hands of Huntington, New York, resident Harry Gilbert, who donated it to the Vanderbilt Museum in 1959. As far as anyone knew, it had barely budged since then.

And now it was potentially available. "So I told them, if you're going to let it go to auction, I know at least one person who's going to bid on it, bid very hard for it, and if someone beats me out, you're going to receive a lot of money for the museum. So I encouraged them for the next couple of weeks to sell it, and two years later, the museum had a private auction that was internationally advertised. That took place at the museum in January 2012, in large part because the staff was afraid to risk moving the Chrysler to an outside auction house." As Howard tells us, you had to bid at least \$125,000 to make the final round of bidding. "I was in this room with several other guys, and we just bid against each other until I was the last one standing. That's how I got it. It was all an accident."

It took several months to get the limousine home. It was still considered Suffolk County property, so the county legislature had to approve the museum's sale, and the county



Matching rake of chauffeur and passenger windshields is an elegant touch by the LeBaron styling staff. In foul weather, a roof insert covers the chauffeur's compartment.





This was the very epitome of automotive luxury in the late 1930s. Handles in the passenger compartment are tastefully plated in polished nickel. The handmade wooden vanity contains a bar and a section for toiletries, mounted ahead of the jump seats. Yes, this clock also works. The blanked-in C-pillars and minuscule rear windows create a cocoon-like effect for the fortunate occupants.

executive had to sign off on the deal. Home with his prize, Howard took stock. He told us that the car was perhaps 95 percent complete, but showed clear indications of neglect. For one thing, a steady drip from the museum shop's roof had worn a hole completely through one rear fender. The paint was peeling off the aluminum bodywork. A lot of the parts were in the back seat, including the fuel tank and rear bumper. "The good news was, nobody had ever tried to restore the car, so the parts were still there, or most of them. The engine only had 25,000 miles on it, and those straight-eight Chryslers are pretty sturdy. I took it over to my own mechanic, Sam Greco of Garden City Park, and it started right up."

The straight-eight engine in question displaces 323.5 cubic inches, produces 130 horsepower, and is linked to a three-speed manual transmission with automatic overdrive. As to the rest of the car, the numbers bespeak its massiveness: Wheelbase, 144 inches. Overall length, 228 inches. Overall width, 78 inches. Overall height, 70 inches. Curb weight, an estimated 6,300 pounds.

It was the middle of 2012, and Howard's goal was to show the Chrysler at Pebble Beach. Dispatch was of the essence. So was a premium-quality, ground-up restoration. He selected Auto Restorations of Lebanon, New Jersey, where owner Steve Babinsky has produced a raft of concours-winning automobiles. When we reached out to Steve, he explained the difficulty of the restoration, especially when done under chronological urgency.

"You have to understand that this was a standard Chrysler from the front bumper back to the cowl, but behind that, everything is custom-made," Steve assesses. "It was a nightmare. First of all, you had a piece of ash that was maybe one-inch wide supporting a door that probably weighed 400 pounds. The framework was attached to these brass structures that went up into the roof and down to the floorboards. All the wood was rotted. There's the handle on the front passenger door, and when you pull it up, it works a mechanism that locks the doors and windows. But you go inside the bodywork and there are all these cams and rods



When the town car was first acquired, the Chrysler straight-eight had never been out of the frame. Despite not having been run in about a quarter century, it immediately fired with the first turn of the key. Transmission has an automatic overdrive setup.



“The good news was, nobody had ever tried to restore the car, so the parts were still there, or most of them. The engine only had 25,000 miles on it, and those straight-eight Chryslers are pretty sturdy. **”**

and springs. There was enough wiring in that rear section of the body to choke an elephant.”

“He did a marvelous job,” Howard affirms. “I must say, the restoration was accelerated as soon as we were accepted by the Pebble Beach Concours. So the last five months, ‘boom,’ it was great the way everything came together. The people [at Pebble Beach] were anxious to get my application, I would say. They were aware of the car and knew it was being restored. Along with historian and Hemmings contributor Walter Gosden, we made monthly visits to Steve’s shop, and I knew it was in the competent hands of somebody who I trusted 100 percent. It was great to see this historic automobile come back to life.”

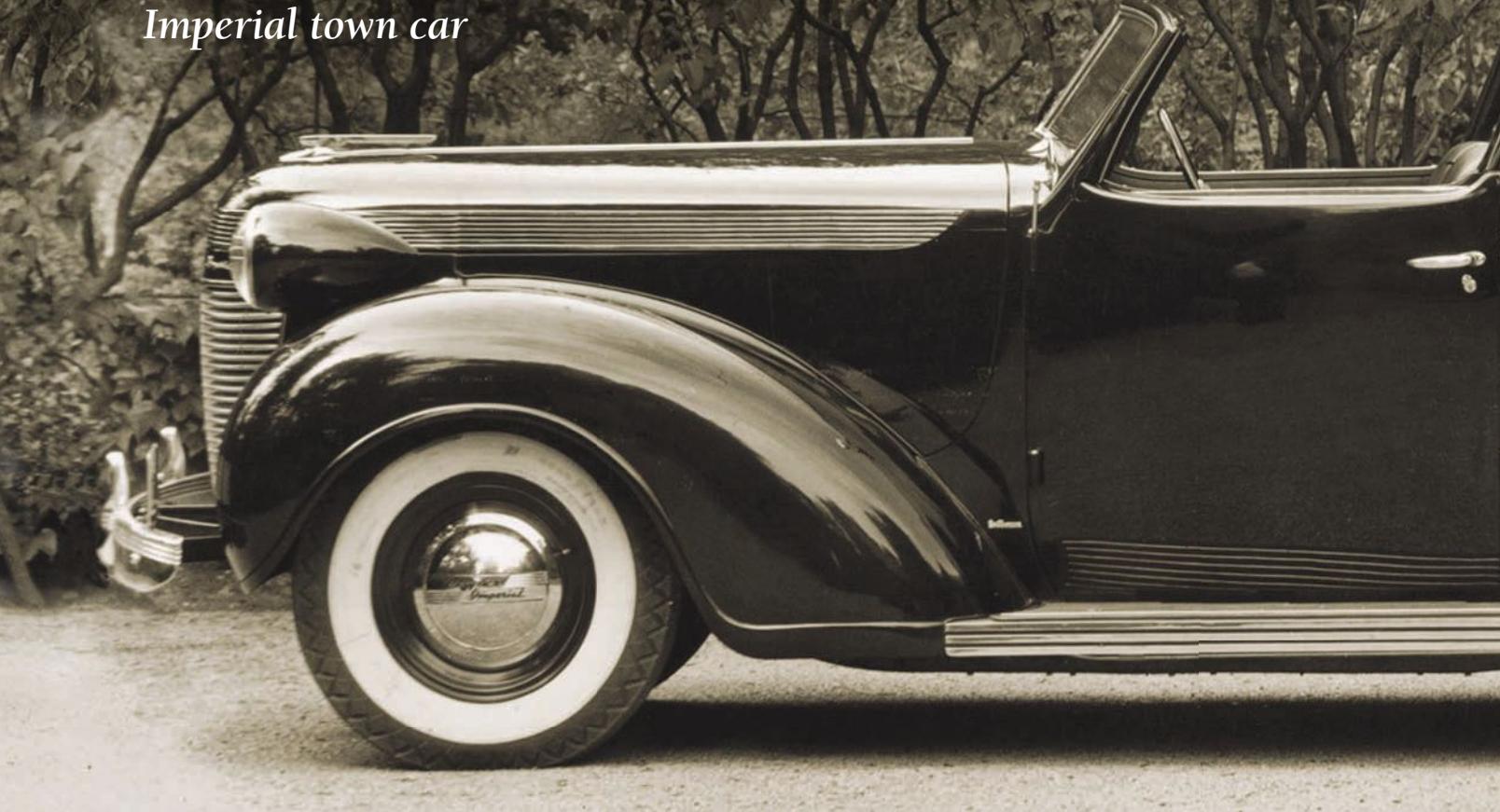
Since the restoration has been finished, Howard has been on a serious run collecting some of the automotive world’s most prestigious hardware. Last year, he scored first in class for American Classic Closed at Pebble Beach, the Classic Chrysler Award at the Radnor Hunt Concours d’Elegance in Pennsylvania, a first place at the AACA National Fall Meet at Hershey, and best in show at the Americana Manhasset Concours d’Elegance. The victory parade continued in 2015, with first place at the Classic Car Club of America’s annual meeting, the Amelia Island Award for Most Elegant Formal Sedan/Town Car at Amelia Island, the Journalists Award at the Greenwich Concours d’Elegance in Connecticut and best-in-show Pre-War at the 50th annual AACA Spring Meet in Old Westbury, New York.

“What was the most difficult part of this restoration? Paying for it,” Howard chuckles. “Even though people have asked me how much it cost to restore, I can’t answer it because I never added up the bills. And I don’t think I’m going to. It has been a lot of fun and continues to be very exciting.” ☀



Streamline Moderne

*The design and construction of
Walter P. Chrysler's 1937 Custom
Imperial town car*



BY WALT GOSDEN • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE WALT GOSDEN COLLECTION

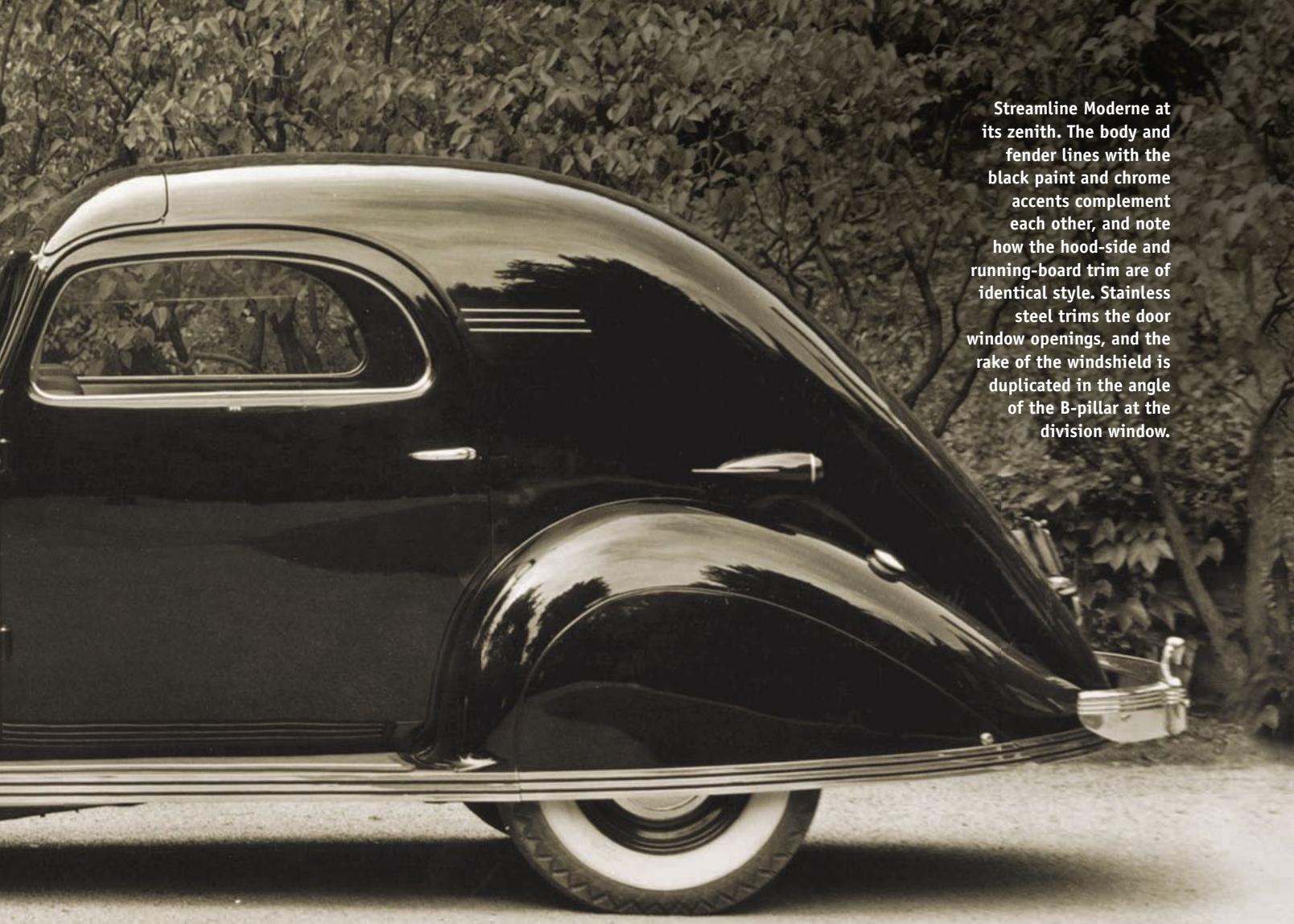
Streamline Moderne—it was the popular style trend that determined the look of everything in the mid to late 1930s. Everything from toasters and radios to skyscrapers, passenger trains and kids' little red wagons saw their designs influenced by this late Art Deco trend. This theme of motion in design was static in execution but flowing at speed in the mind's eye.

In 1937, Chrysler Corporation, in its promotional material, deemed its new Custom Imperial cars as having "undeniable smartness" and explained that the "forward-reaching styling" made their cars "long, lithe and low-slung."

The pinnacle of the aerodynamic 1937 Custom Imperial was a special-order, one-of-a-kind formal town car built for the Chrysler family. Walter Chrysler and his wife, Della, and their children had called Long Island their home since 1923. In February of that year, he purchased a grand house set on 12 acres in Kings Point. The white stucco Beaux Arts mansion of French Renaissance style would be their home for the rest of their lives. Cars built to order would take the family to events in New York City that was but a few miles away.

The final family car that Walter Chrysler ordered was to be a gift to his wife: a 1937 model C-15 Custom Imperial, and it would be designed and built by LeBaron, which was a subsidiary of the Briggs Body Corp. in Detroit. Who exactly designed this town car remains a mystery. Chrysler did have an Art & Color section and Ray Dietrich (who was a founding partner of LeBaron in 1920) was the head of it. It is not known if Dietrich had any input for the styling of the town car, and in his reminiscences of his career in the CCCA's *The Classic Car* magazine 50 years ago, he did not mention it.

What is known, however, is that a stock 1937 Chrysler Custom Imperial sedan, with its 140-inch wheelbase, was used as a base to start. The front clip remained the stock factory issue,



Streamline Moderne at its zenith. The body and fender lines with the black paint and chrome accents complement each other, and note how the hood-side and running-board trim are of identical style. Stainless steel trims the door window openings, and the rake of the windshield is duplicated in the angle of the B-pillar at the division window.

but just about everything aft of the firewall was eliminated or changed to create the very special car Walter wanted for Della. The stock firewall was used as was the instrument panel, but the entire stock cowl and windshield were discarded. A new cowl with V-shaped windshield (factory Imperial sedans had a one-piece windshield) was created. LeBaron built a fair number of custom-bodied Lincoln KB series cars in that era (they had a two-piece V windshield) and the Chrysler's windshield was constructed along the same principles, featuring a lap joint at the top of the posts.

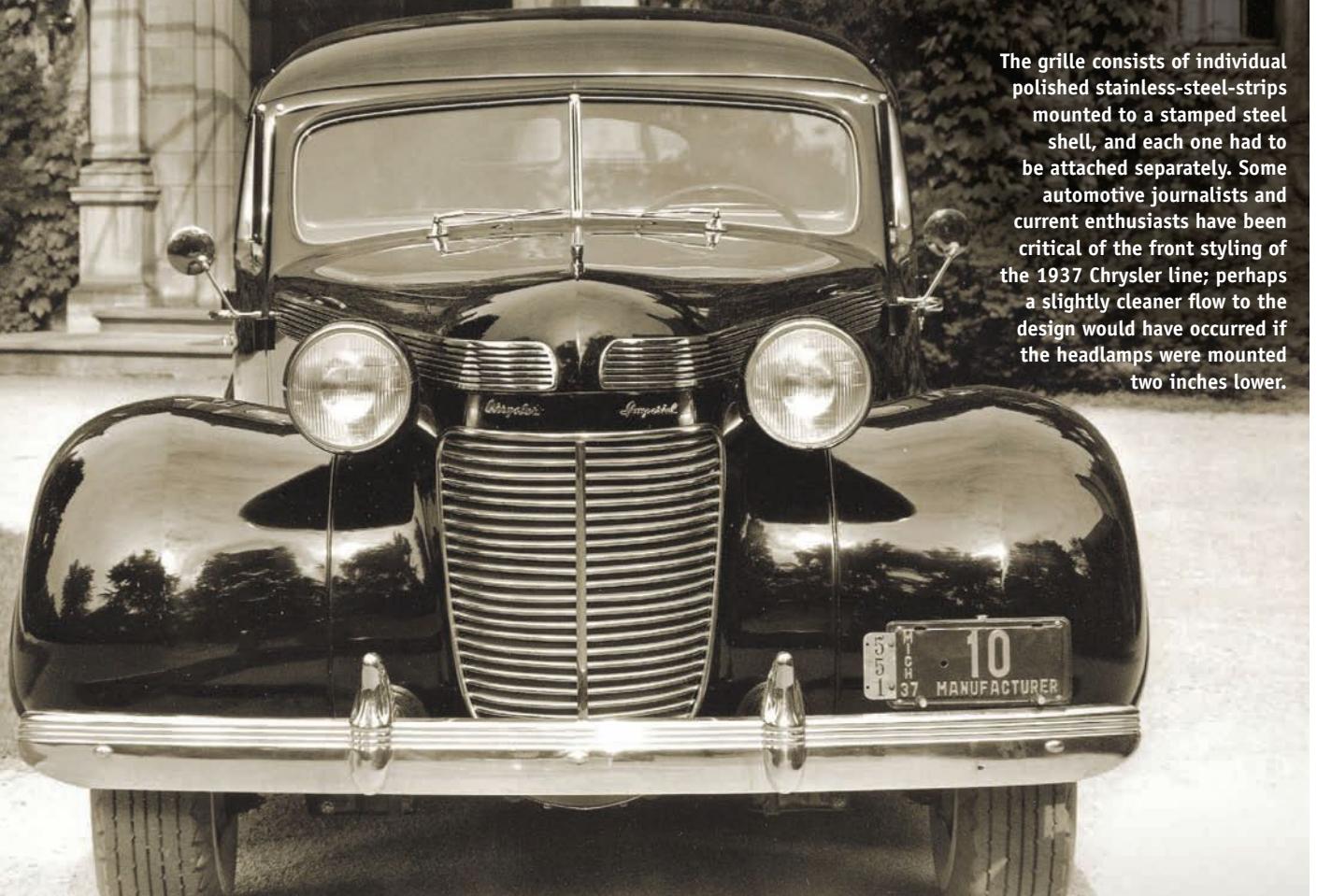
The stock instrument panel saw a V-shaped piece of metal welded to the top edge to fill in the gap. The chassis was cut just aft of the B-pillar, and four inches were added to increase the wheelbase to 144 inches; the driveshaft and running boards were lengthened, as well. The hood panel sides just before the edge of the front doors were cut to allow a large air vent to be fitted for ventilation for the driver's compartment. The new steel cowl had the housings for these vents framed out and fabricated from many small pieces of wood.

The rear fenders were created from scratch and out of steel to follow the contour of the body shell, which was made of aluminum. Despite extending the chassis, it still wasn't long enough to accommodate the long flowing coachwork; the frame ends approximately 15 inches short of the rounded rear trunk/tail section. That part of the body, like the rest of the car's structural framework, was made out of seasoned ash.

The interior styling and appointments are just as spectacular as the exterior design. Most of the time, the chauffeur's compartment in a town car was spartan, with plain panels of leather and the doors and seats having no extra stitching or amenities. Not so on this car. The horizontal and vertical pattern sewed into the leather on the door panels echoes the same design that is found on the cloth panels in the rear compartment. A center armrest folds down for added comfort, and there is even a radio. The brightwork on the dashboard is nickel plated as were those on the factory-bodied C-15 Custom Imperial sedans. The bright but soft glow of the nickel-plated gauge surrounds and decorative trim against the glossy black painted instrument panel is a work of art in itself. Interior window crank and door handles are plated as well; in most cars of this ilk in the previous decades, they were painted to avoid undue ostentation.

The speaker screen for the driver to hear communications from the passengers is located at the left cowl panel at knee height, next to the air vent. The division window is powered by an electric motor the size of a small football located at the center of the window behind the chauffeur's seat-back cushion. Sole-noids for the motor are accessible, but the motor not so much.

The rear compartment has plain panels of tan cloth without any elaborate stitching, buttons, etc. and a similarly colored cloth is used on the door panels, headliner, jump seats and area below the woodwork at the division panel. The horizontal lines that are a signature of Streamline Moderne design are



The grille consists of individual polished stainless-steel-strips mounted to a stamped steel shell, and each one had to be attached separately. Some automotive journalists and current enthusiasts have been critical of the front styling of the 1937 Chrysler line; perhaps a slightly cleaner flow to the design would have occurred if the headlamps were mounted two inches lower.

evident throughout the styling of the rear compartment. While the raised-stitch bead lines at the centers of the huge rear door panels are plain, they serve to draw your eye front to back. This design element is reinforced quite dramatically by the style of the headliner. On nearly every car of that era, the headliner was held in place by rods that are anchored at the sides of the body so the seams stitched into it run from door to door. That is not the case here, as the seams for the headliner run front to back, parallel with the sides of the car. These lines in the cloth strongly pull your eye along the length of the interior, from the partition to the rear window.

All of the wood in the rear compartment is flamed maple, which gives the appearance of tiger stripes. It has the optical property known as "chatoyancy" or cat's-eye effect. These wavy lines are beautiful luminous streaks that reflect light, and are often seen in musical instruments such as violins and guitars. The wood trim around the car's windows, inset into the door panels' surrounds, the sphere-shaped quarter-panel vanities, and the division window are an extremely thin veneer.

The bezels on the window cranks and door handles, as well as the frame around the clock, are crafted in vivid blue enamel—all very dramatic, yet elegant. The carpet on the floor and footrests is of a complementary darker tan color. A separate soft plush removable carpet is laid over that as a second layer. Pearl-colored buttons are numerous in the rear armrests and control assorted courtesy lamps and other amenities.

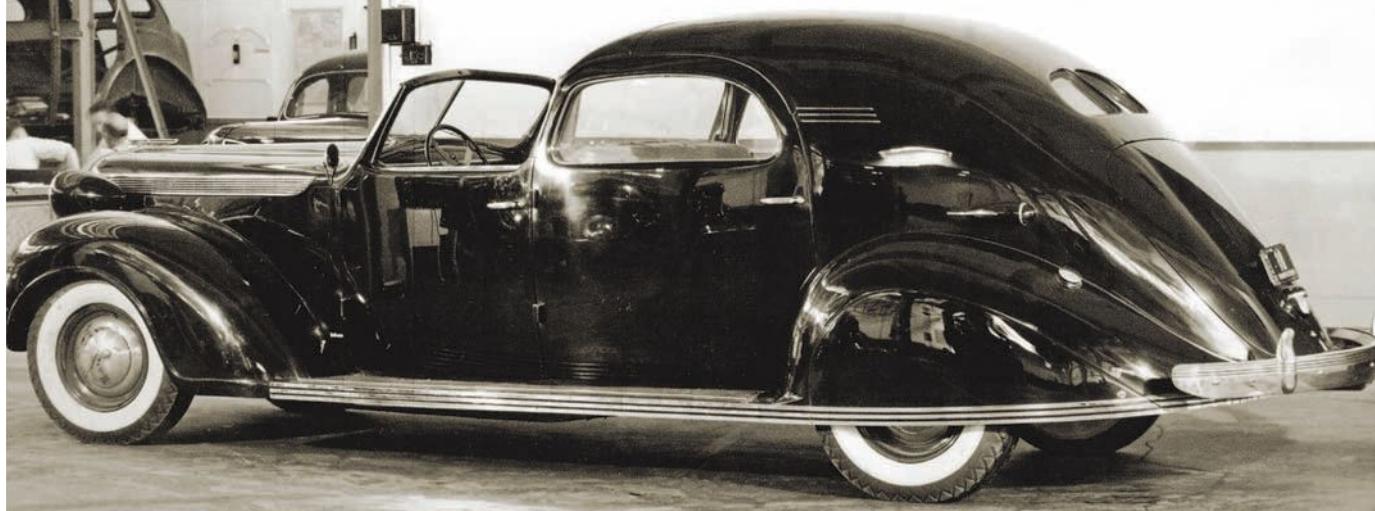
Getting it all to function is 1,500 feet of wire behind the upholstery in the rear compartment alone. Since the body structure is framed in wood and the skin is aluminum, ground wires have to be run from every electrical component to the chassis to complete the circuit.

One of the unusual features of the car is the automatic

mechanical system fitted to the rear doors. A pair of giant coiled clock-like springs was mounted into a substantial wood frame at the center of each of the doors. These springs connect to mechanisms with cables that run in tubes down the B-pillar door posts and across the bottom of the division panel. Deadbolt-like fixtures were fitted to the B-pillars and doors in perfect alignment. What all of this does is, if both of the rear door windows are lowered into the doors and all four doors are closed, the chauffeur can lift the right front door handle up a half inch and the spring/cable mechanism will simultaneously raise both rear door windows to close them, thus eliminating the need to open each rear door and roll them up manually. It works kind of like an upside-down guillotine. To my knowledge, no other car has used this system before or since. All windows in the four doors are lowered with the conventional crank handle.

So, the division window is raised and lowered electrically, and the rear door windows are raised by an automatic mechanical system—pretty innovative for 1937.

The area over the chauffeur compartment can be configured in three ways: The first is completely open, with a metal panel fitted above the division glass and in perfect contour with the compound curves of the body. The second is a canvas covering that snaps into place after the narrow panel above the division is removed and a header piece fitted and latched to the top of the windshield, with separate arms at each side running from the roof to the windshield (A-pillar). The third option, intended to be used in extended inclement and cold weather, consists of a huge wood-framed solid metal panel that locks into the roof as well as the top of the windshield and is styled to flow with the compound curves of the coachwork. This panel has a fully lined leather headliner and a dome lamp that is functional, as it gets connected to an outlet in the area above the division window.



At the Briggs Body plant soon after completion, with what could be—in the background at the far left—the body of the donor car, which had been removed from the chassis used to build the town car. Note how the wide plated trim band starts at the back of the front fender and wraps completely around the back edge of the body.

This panel would require at least two people to fit it into place and therefore would have to be planned ahead for.

There are many styling nuances that this car features and all were taken into consideration to work in harmony. There is no belt molding to carry your eye from front to back as there is on the majority of custom-built and production cars. The lines of the thin, highly polished trim bars that lay horizontally on the tall vertical grille are repeated in a wide plated trim band that runs from the front of the nose cone down the entire length on the side of the hood to the windshield. The end of that trim kicks up at the back and is raked at an angle to let your sight line flow up to the windshield post uninterrupted.

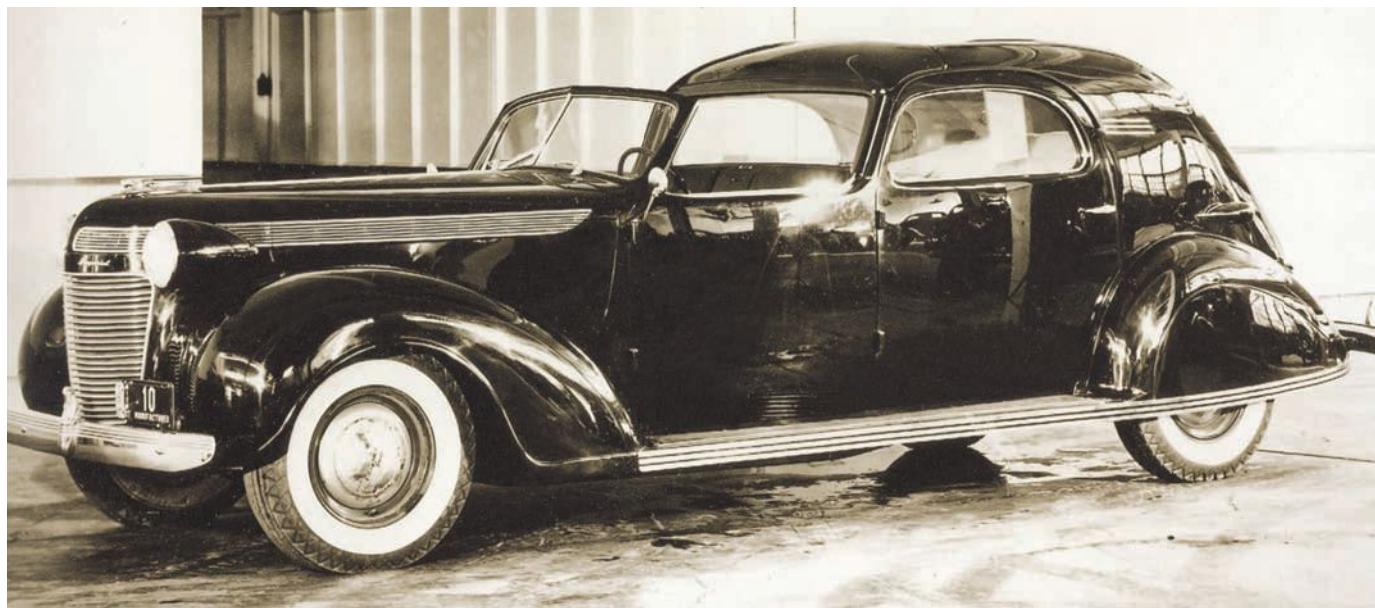
The top edge of the doors continue the visual line and are capped by incredibly thin strips of polished stainless steel, and the rear doors have their windows framed in stainless, too. The location of the door handles, keep the visual flow going, as do the rearward-raked B-pillars, which form the start of the wonderful curvature of the rear body section.

Three plated speed streaks are at eye level just behind the rear door, and the bullet-shaped taillamp mounted just above

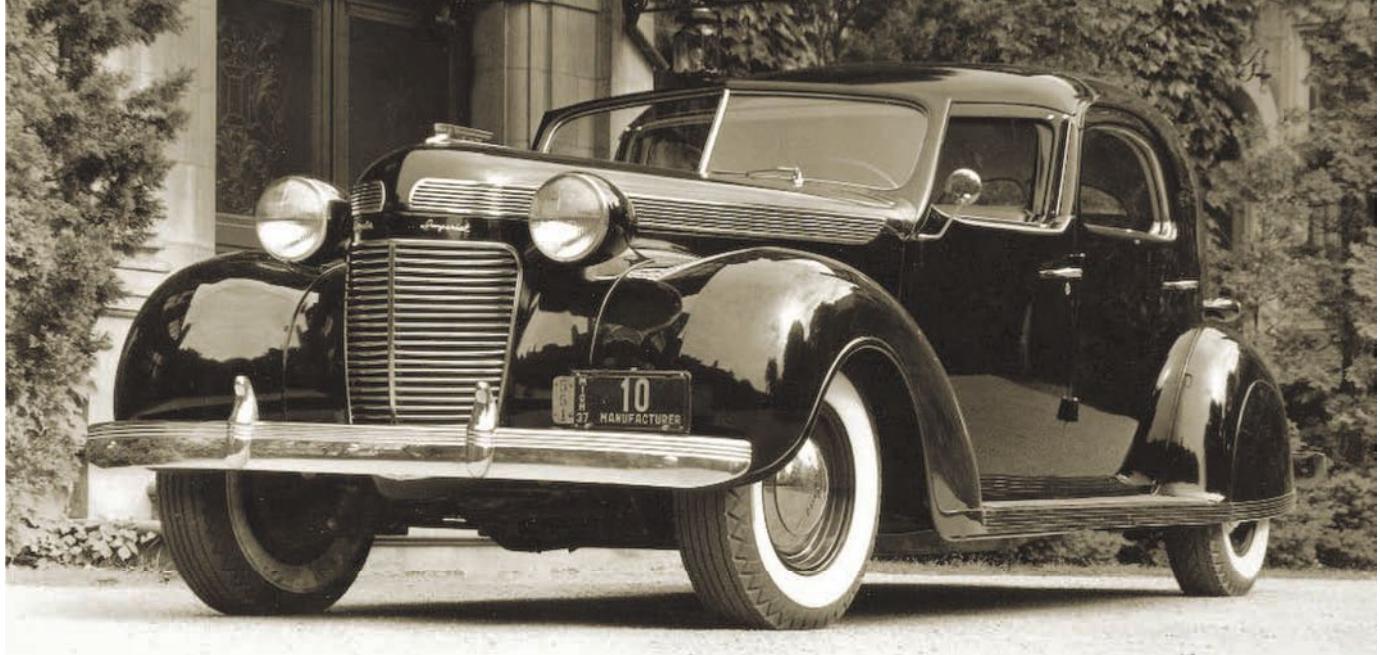
the rear fender has a plated horizontal fin that leaves your line of vision uninterrupted. The front of the rear fender has a similar contour to the front fender, but extends back to match the fast-back rake of the rear of the body.

A wide band of chrome-plated brass trim with horizontal lines that mimic the hood trim starts at the edge of the rear of the front fender. This band of metal runs the length of the running board, blending seamlessly into the bottom edge of the rear fender skirt and continues around the back edge of the body under the trunk lid. It terminates at the other side at the rear edge of the other front fender. It, in effect, has drawn a wide visual line around three-quarters of the car and thus lends added continuity to the design as you walk around viewing it.

This Chrysler is very heavy. The rear fenders are formed from steel and have their compound curves blended into a perfect flow by the use of a considerable amount of lead, which was then filed and sanded smooth. The wheels are not the stock C-15 Imperial wheels that were fitted to the production cars. Rather, they are approximately 3 inches deeper and have a sixth lug nut instead of the standard five lugs, thus the brake drums are dif-



The just-completed car was photographed while still inside the Briggs Body plant. Stock 1937 Chryslers, including the big C-15 Imperial sedans, all had flat, one-piece windshields. Cars designed and built by LeBaron all had a two-piece "V" windshield. LeBaron was also fabricating custom-bodied KB Lincoln convertible coupes and convertible sedans during this era on a regular basis.



The stock Imperial hood, front fenders, headlamps and grille were used; however, the wheels were 3 inches wider than the standard wheels in order to support the weight of the car. Michigan manufacturer license plates were installed when it left the factory.

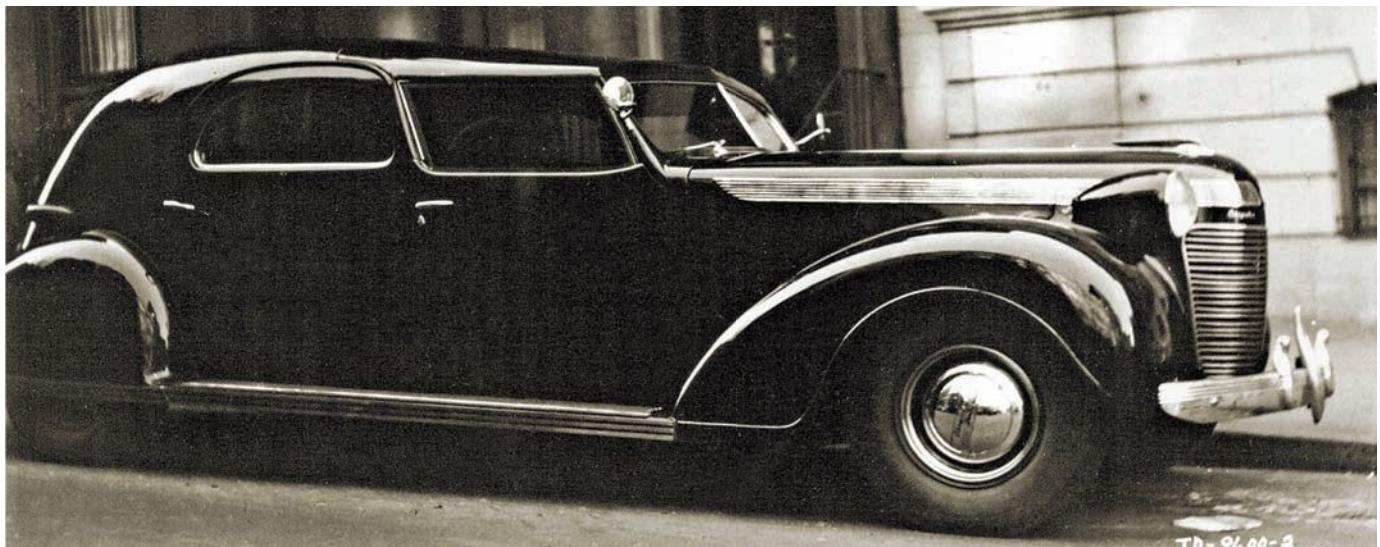
ferent as well. The center hub of the wheel is chrome plated and then riveted to the outer rim, which is painted.

After this Chrysler was originally completed, it was well documented, with numerous photographs taken at the Briggs plant in Detroit. When delivered to New York, some modifications to the new car were most likely requested by the chauffeur. The buttons in the front compartment the chauffeur would press for communication to the rear seat passengers were originally located at the center of the seat back, just above the armrest; these were moved to the instrument panel for easier access. Exterior rear-view mirrors were relocated from the top door hinge, where they banged into the body, to the windshield posts. They are identical to the mirrors fitted to Rolls-Royce cars at the time and were most likely supplied by the Nil Milior auto accessory store. The largest modification was the addition of a cowl vent at the rear center of the hood. That front compartment, all in black leather in a black car, had to be like an oven. The Humber-Binder Co. on West 64th Street was LeBaron's repair and service depot early on, and most likely, it was entrusted with performing the modifications. What the cowl vent and components were

sourced from is not known, but they would have required some difficult modifications.

Where did the unknown stylist who designed this Chrysler get his inspiration? I would venture to guess that the 1933 Cadillac V-16 fastback five-passenger coupe on display at the Chicago World's Fair certainly had to influence the profile of the rear body section and, likewise, the stainless-steel trim around the side windows. The 1934 Packard Twelve boattail coupe, with its tapered tail and pontoon-skirted rear fenders, was built by LeBaron and clearly shows that LeBaron was familiar with the techniques required to fashion sheetmetal into that flowing envelope style. I also see hints of the rear fender skirt styling that was on the outstanding Studebaker Land Cruiser sedans of 1934-'35. The Pierce Silver Arrow, both the show and production versions, and the Lincoln Zephyr all made bold styling statements that could have influenced the design of this Chrysler Imperial.

This amazing town car can be a visual overload when first viewed. It is elegant in black and chrome, but the impact of its combination of speed lines and incredible contoured compound curves leaves one speechless. ☀



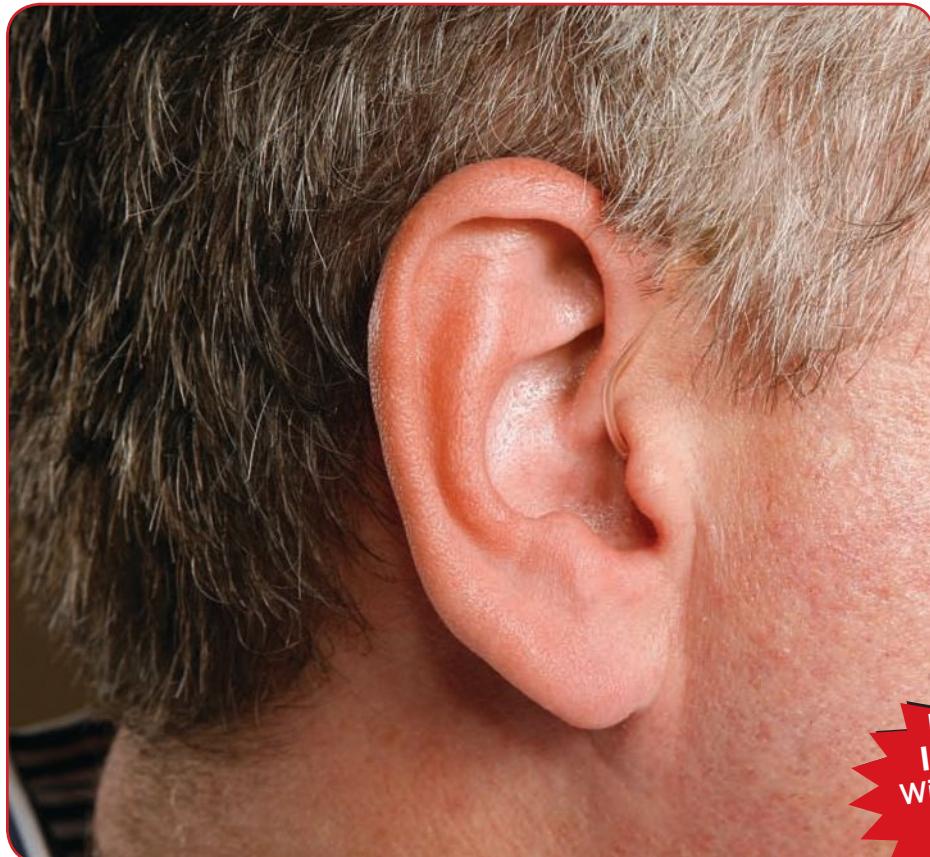
This is the only known photograph of the LeBaron town car when in use prior to World War II. It shows the car with the hardtop panel in place over the chauffeur compartment and the mirrors that were fitted once the car arrived in New York. Location is in Manhattan.

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Missing the Mark-et

The 1954 Hudson Jet Liner is a reliable compact, and in this case, it's enjoyed as a daily driver



BY MILTON STERN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Hudson could have spent its resources on a total restyle or by adding a station wagon to the step-down line, or better yet, by developing a V-8 in the early 1950s. Instead, it spent \$16 million on a compact car that was too little—or some say too much—too late.



Hudson decided to compete in the market segment that had been created by its closest competitor, Nash, with its 100-inch wheelbase 1950 Rambler. The Rambler was the right size, and Nash loaded it up with all the available options. Nash decided to bring out the fixed side window, roll-top convertible, a top-of-the-line Rambler model, first. Lois Lane's convertible was quickly followed by an all-steel station wagon and a very attractive hard-top Country Club coupe. The newest Nash was marketed as the perfect second car for the country club set because Nash knew it couldn't sell it for any less than a standard size car (it actually

cost more), nor did it want the perception that "small" equals "cheap." The strategy worked, and by mid-decade, Ramblers were keeping Nash's head above water.

Soon, Kaiser introduced its companion make, the Henry J, which sold extremely well its first year but dropped drastically in its sophomore year. The Henry J was sold as a stripped-down commuter car and was perceived as cheap, even if the interior, like that of all Kaisers, was beautifully upholstered. However, even less-affluent drivers wanted a trunk lid and a glovebox.

Then came the Willys Aero. It also had many features similar



Chrome accents across the functional instrument panel add elegance and flair. Large wheel helps steer this heavy compact. Visibility is excellent.



Jet Liner interior featured three special two-tone upholstery color choices and included armrests, robe rail, ashtray and map pocket.

to the Rambler. The Aero's size and suspension design provided one of the best combinations of handling and ride of that era, and the Willys engines had a great reputation for reliability and performance. Unfortunately, the Aero never quite found its place in the American market. Proof of its excellent engineering and style was in its long life below the equator—through 1972 in Brazil.

By the time Hudson introduced the Jet, the market segment was too crowded and still dominated by the Rambler, which was the only make to offer a station wagon. The Nash Rambler wagons accounted for more than a fifth of wagon sales in the United States at the time. Why Willys and Hudson didn't include a station wagon in their compacts' lineups remains a mystery.

The Jet was engineered by Millard Toncray and used the famous Hudson all-welded, single-unit Monobilt construction

as the step-down design on a 105-inch wheelbase. It weighed almost 300 pounds more than the competition and was clearly overbuilt. Although Hudson called the Jet's engine "a scaled down H-145 Hornet six," it was actually a Commodore straight-eight with two cylinders lopped off, giving it the same 3.00-inch bore and 4.75-inch stroke, with a 202 cubic-inch displacement and 104 horsepower. Buyers could also order the optional Twin H-Power dual carburetor setup or a high-compression aluminum cylinder head.

Hudson's talented chief of design, Frank Spring, did not create the Jet. President A. Edward Barit and Chicago Hudson dealer Jim Moran, who sold five percent of all Hudsons at the time, were blamed for this one. Barit wanted chair-high seats and a tall greenhouse, so a gentleman could wear his hat while driving. This made the Jet tall and narrow despite having a recessed/step-down floor pan. Moran wanted the Ford wraparound backlite. In addition, Barit insisted on high fenders and Oldsmobile-like taillamps. Nothing good could come from any of this. The Jet clearly looked cobbled together. Urban legend says that Spring cried when he saw the final product and told Barit they shouldn't sell this car.

The standard Hudson Jet arrived as a four-door sedan with a base price of \$1,858. For about \$100 more, you could buy the Super Jet, available with two or four doors. Hudson sold 21,143 Jets for the 1953 model year and 14,224 for 1954, even after adding the Jet Liner as a more luxurious Super Jet with added chrome and three exclusive, two-tone vinyl interiors—red and white, blue and white, and green and white—with color-coordinated horn buttons. At the bottom of the line for 1954 was a stripped-down Club Sedan.

When Hudson merged with Nash in 1954 to form American Motors Corporation, the Jet was laid to rest, and Hudson dealers sold Hudson-badged Ramblers and Metropolitans beginning in 1955.

Even today, the Hudson Jet is an acquired taste. While a Jet Liner at shows generates lots of positive attention, they don't command high numbers when they come up for sale, making any Hudson Jet an easy way to



Metal ID plate is located on the passenger side in Canadian-built Hudsons.



The color of the Jet Liner horn button was coordinated with the special two-tone upholstery. The easy-to-read Jet Liner 120 MPH speedometer cluster would also be used in the coachbuilt Hudson Italia. Clock and AM radio were optional.

enter the hobby in a fun little 1950s car.

This month's 1954 Hudson Jet Liner drive-Report car is mine, and I lovingly named him, Fred Mertz. I first spotted my Hudson Jet Liner when doing one of my usual searches for bucket list cars. As you may know from reading my column in this magazine, I like Detroit underdogs. This particular Hudson Jet Liner was being sold by the Ellingson Car Museum in Rogers, Minnesota, near Minneapolis, and coincidentally, I was planning a cross-country trip at the time. I immediately altered my plans to include an eight-hour detour. I contacted the dealer and arranged a day to come see the car.

In their large showroom, sitting amid acres of chrome and fins, was this Silver Blue and Coronation White Jet Liner. It has the red and white interior with the aforementioned red horn button.

This Hudson is one of the few surviving Canadian-built Jet Liners. It was ordered without the Continental kit, full wheel covers, fender skirts or whitewall tires. In fact, the original blackwall spare is still in the trunk. You would have thought I stepped into a time warp and ordered the car myself because I also don't like fender skirts, full wheel covers and Continental kits. While this car was optioned with the clock and radio, there were no back-up lamps. The clue to its Canadian

“ I have never driven cars that make people drool or coo, but the reaction I received when I drove onto the parking lot where the tour began was surprising. ”

heritage, other than the factory plate on the passenger-side A-pillar, is the lack of CONELRAD symbols on the radio, which has black buttons as opposed to chrome. I also suspect the radio may have been a dealer add-on because the antenna is on the fender rather than Hudson-like atop the center of the windshield.

The original owner restored the Jet Liner in 1982. The first weekend I had the Jet Liner, my friend Frank and I took it on the Orphan Car Tour, a road rally that takes place in Maryland every year. I have never driven cars that make people drool or coo, but the reaction I received when I drove onto the parking lot where the tour began was surprising. I was amazed at how many people had never seen a Hudson Jet before. There was a crowd around my car. Where were these people in 1953 and '54?

To me, the Hudson Jet Liner is just a quirky little 1950s compact that is cute and fun to drive. I have owned a lot of cars over the last 35 years, and I can honestly say this Jet is the most reliable. Since I bought it in May 2013, I have put close to 10,000 miles on it. I have driven it from the Baltimore region to Saugatuck, Michigan, in one day, and returned home two days later. That's a 1,300-mile round trip, and it ran flawlessly.

There is nothing modern under the hood



Based on Hudson's eight, the 202-cu.in. flathead six makes 104hp; it's peppy and economical. Radiator overflow tank is only modern item.

owner's view



I like driving this car more than any car I've owned. My Hudson Jet Liner is equipped exactly as I would have ordered it. This car is the perfect size and has just the right combination of handling and performance to keep up with modern traffic. I can run errands or travel all day without a care in the world. I also enjoy knowing I can go to a car club event and no one else will arrive in a Hudson Jet Liner.

except for the radiator overflow bucket. This is still a 6-volt car. There is no electronic ignition, and it still has a vacuum fuel pump. Our grandparents drove cars equipped as such for more than 70 years, so I see no need to change things. I don't even mind the vacuum wipers.

I have driven my Jet on days with a wind chill below zero. I just pump the gas a few times, turn the key, and my Hudson starts right up. Don't worry, I never drive it when there is salt or chemicals on the road.

When you get behind the wheel, the first thing you notice is the headroom. I am six-four, and there are at least 4 inches of space above my head. However, the car is narrow. People were a lot skinnier in the 1950s. I cannot imagine six people riding comfortably in this car today. I've taken three friends to dinner, and everyone was comfortable, but that was the limit.

The high-torque six-cylinder engine gives good acceleration and returns around 21 MPG. I can cruise all day at 60-65 MPH without a care in the world. This Jet Liner is equipped with a Dual-Range Hydra-Matic, a sturdy but slightly clunky transmission. Merging onto the interstate is easy. I even pass people on occasion, but I usually stay in the right lane.

Upon delivery, I had all the fluids and filters changed, any leaking seals and gaskets replaced, and a four-wheel alignment. There were only two major items needing attention: The radiator was re-cored and the carburetor rebuilt. This Hudson Jet Liner still has a leather accelerator pump, and it

runs fine on mid-grade gasoline.

The Jet's engine does require exhaust valve adjustments every 5,000 miles. It is relatively easy and only takes a couple of hours. The first sign they need adjusting is if you lose 5-7 MPH while going uphill on the highway.

The nine-inch brakes are a good size for this car. You stop with confidence, and they feature the Hudson "triple-safe" system. If the hydraulics go out, the mechanical brake system kicks in.

Where the Hudson Jet feels overbuilt is in the steering. The Jet's steering is the hardest of all the similarly equipped vintage cars I've owned. I truly appreciated its tank-like build quality when I drove a friend's 1953 Packard. The Packard's manual steering handled like a pedal car compared to my Hudson. Stability around the corners is also good, thanks to large suspension components and an anti-roll bar up front.

I wash my Hudson as I would any car and use Meguiar's detailer after every bath. On the upholstery, I use Turtle Wax ICE Interior Cleaner and Protectant. While the 33-year-old restoration shows in some of the nicks and bumps on the paint, I don't plan on having the car restored again any time soon. The bottom is clean and rust-free, thanks to the undercoating that was applied back in 1982. I enjoy driving it everywhere and running errands without having to worry about where I park. I even drive it in the rain. After all, I wash my Hudson Jet Liner with water. ☺

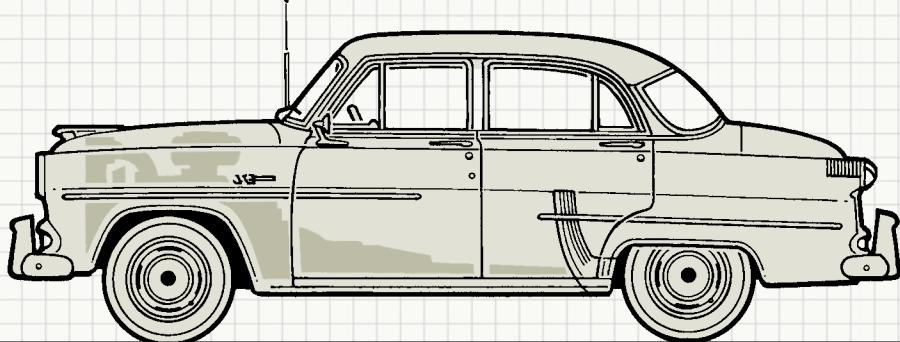


1954 HUDSON JET LINER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO ©2015 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



54 inches



105 inches

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$1,838
PRICE AS OPTIONED	\$2,057
OPTIONS (ON CAR PROFILED)	Clock, AM Radio, Dual Outside Mirrors, Dual-Range Hydra-Matic transmission

ENGINE

TYPE	L-head straight-six, cast-iron block and cylinder head
DISPLACEMENT	202.0 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3.00 x 4.75 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	7.50:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	104 @ 4,000
TORQUE @ RPM	158-lb.ft. @ 1,600
VALVETRAIN	Solid lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Four
FUEL SYSTEM	Carter WA1 one-barrel carburetor
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Pressure
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	6-volt
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single exhaust

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Four-speed Dual-Range Hydra-Matic
RATIOS	1st 3.81:1 2nd 2.63:1 3rd 1.45:1 4th 1:1 Reverse 4.30:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Hypoid with semi-floating rear axles
RATIO	3.54:1

STEERING

TYPE	Gemmer worm-and-roller
RATIO	20.2:1
TURNS, LOCK-TO-LOCK	4.2
TURNING CIRCLE	33.4 feet

BRAKES

TYPE	Hydraulic, four-wheel manual, with mechanical back-up feature
FRONT/REAR	9-inch drums

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Unitized, all-steel body
BODY STYLE	Four-door sedan
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Unequal length A-arms with coil springs and tubular hydraulic shock absorbers, anti-roll bar
REAR	Solid axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs and tubular hydraulic shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	Pressed-steel disc
FRONT/REAR	4.50 x 15 inches
TIRES	Cooper Classic Radial
FRONT/REAR	P195/75R15

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	105 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	180.69 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	138.38 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	62.75 inches
FRONT TRACK	54 inches
REAR TRACK	52.50 inches
SHIPPING WEIGHT	2,760 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5.5 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	16.1 quarts
FUEL TANK	15 gallons

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.514
WEIGHT PER BHP	26.35 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	13.56 pounds

PERFORMANCE*

0-60 MPH	15.2 seconds
TOP SPEED	102.4 MPH

* As per *Motor Trend* road test

PROS & CONS

- + Hudson reliability and durability
- + Ability to keep up with modern traffic and cruise all day
- + Good gas mileage
- Rarity makes finding trim and some body parts difficult
- Always telling people it isn't a Ford or Oldsmobile
- No investment potential due to its being an "acquired taste"

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BEFORE FRANK DOMOHOSKI OF

Boston (Recaps, HCC #130) further decimates his intellectual prowess, he had better reread his dictionary. Yes, "decimate" means to reduce by one-tenth; it also means to destroy a large part of. Pat Foster was correct in writing that the Ford sales war with Chevrolet decimated the independent car makers.

Terry Lea
Lexington, South Carolina

I HAVE TO DEFEND PAT FOSTER'S USE

of "decimate" in HCC #130. While the word does have its roots in the Latin *decimatus*, and one of its definitions is to reduce by one-tenth, as in taxes, other definitions include "b: to cause great destruction or harm to <firebombs decimated the city> <an industry decimated by recession>".

As to the Wankel rotary engine, it never lived up to its promise for several reasons. Mr. Bohacz correctly points out almost all of them, but a lack of low RPM torque was just as much of an issue. The early rotary engines did not work well with automatic transmissions. Also, AMC designed the Pacer to use GM's rotary and had to scramble to shoehorn in its straight-six engine at the last minute. And GM had shown both two- and four-rotor Corvettes on the show circuit at the time as well.

One last thing. In Detroit Underdogs, when considering the 1980-'82 Thunderbirds, you have to look at the competition at the time. Everybody was downsizing. I think the T-bird looked at least as good as the competition. I think only the Cutlass Supreme looked better. But when you look at what bookended this series, it doesn't look as good. Ford tried to transfer the style of the 1977-'79s to the new models, and it came out stubby looking. Then the 1983 models came out gorgeous looking. Mike Chambers
West Chester, Ohio

THANK YOU FOR MILTON STERN'S

Detroit Underdogs column on the 1980-'82 Ford Thunderbird. My hometown of Lorain, Ohio, was where Thunderbirds were built from 1977 until 1998.

With an interest in cars, I was always watching for any unusual cars on the road. While doing yard work for a local church in the summer of 1978, I recall being stopped in my tracks by a car in

the nearby intersection that I couldn't easily identify. That car was to become the 1980 Thunderbird. I remember the unusual profile and high-as-the-trunk-lid taillamps. Seems that Ford was road-testing mules of the new T-bird, and I felt privileged to catch some long glimpses. As the year progressed, I began to see more pre-production T-birds and Cougars. The very upright styling made quite an impression on me.

From everything I have read about these cars, it seems that Ford was still "looking over the fence" in the Seventies to see what GM would do with the Monte Carlo. When the downsized versions arrived in 1978, Ford apparently ruled out a more streamlined Thunderbird to better compete with the new Monte Carlo. The 1980-'82 T-birds obviously bear that out, even if they weren't very popular.

Although the "Squarebirds" are fairly unloved among enthusiasts and collectors, perhaps their initial rarity will move them toward collectable status in the future. Corvairs and Edsels were once unloved, too.

Jay David Schuck
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

IN THE MID-TO-LATE 1950s, I

operated one of those big Walter plows as shown in Commercial Chronicle in HCC #129. We used it to keep the runways clear on an abandoned airfield so we could launch high-altitude research balloons for the military. We used surplus military vehicles that we housed and maintained as a civilian contractor on that site.

Built in the early 1940s, it had wood cab doors and floorboards, but no power steering and no heater, four-speed manual, no brake assistance, updraft carbs, and a 100-gallon fuel tank (not MPG but gallons per mile with both engines running while plowing). It took two men to operate; one to drive, the other to run the side blade and auxiliary engine, and both to turn the huge steering wheel when we had to turn, which is why we didn't need a heater in the cab. Moving down a runway at 15 to 20 MPH we moved a wide swath of snow.

After five years of use, the front-drive system wiped out and the Walters factory technician who reviewed the damage pretty much totaled out the unit. I am not sure what became of the unit, as the

Navy disposed of all vehicles when repair was not possible or the contractor's use was no longer needed.

Dick Doucette
Monticello, Minnesota

THE FIRST FAMILY CAR I REMEMBER

was part of my Detroit family before I was—a 1939 Chevrolet Town Sedan, black over black, nothing deluxe about it. Dad drove it until 1948 because of the forced austerity of the war. So I was taken with Ken Symonds's "De Luxe Driver" in HCC #130. I'm sure my dad's first turn signal was an option on our 1952 Chevy two-door, so I was surprised to see one mounted like an accessory on the steering column of Ken's '39 coupe; more surprised to find it not listed with the options on the specification sheet, especially since the right windshield wiper was. Could it be an aftermarket kit from somebody like The Lester Company?

Randall Keils
Kalamazoo, Michigan

REGARDING THE ARTICLE ON THE

1942 Oldsmobile in HCC #130, I noted brief mention of the tail/stop lamp size. The 1942-spec models of every make have always had a special place in my heart since they were the "perpetually new cars" when I first became interested in and observant of automobiles sometime during World War II. I was observant enough, not only at the time but later, to note that the lamps fitted to the subject car were Chevrolet units rather than the design used on most 1942, 1946 and 1947 Oldsmobile Series 60 and 70 cars.

My speculation as to why the Chevrolet taillamps were used on this particular Olds application is that, facing the government-mandated curtailment of brightwork usage (except for bumpers) on all passenger cars starting in December 1941, the supply of original chrome-plated Oldsmobile lamp assemblies ran out at Guide Lamp so they shipped the bright-trimmed Chevrolet lamps as substitutes.

That having been said, I can recall a late 1942 Olds Series 66 Special Town Sedan equipped with gray-painted

Continued on page 38

Heroic Flop

In the automobile business, being a good marketer means trying new ideas and finding new ways to excite potential buyers. But sometimes it also means abandoning a favorite idea that hasn't worked out as planned. And being a good automotive businessman sometimes means being able to admit to yourself you made a mistake. Case in point: the Ajax.

When Charles Nash, president of the Nash Motors Company, originally mapped out the direction he wanted his new company to take, he set his aim squarely at the medium-priced market with a line of well-designed six-cylinder cars—the

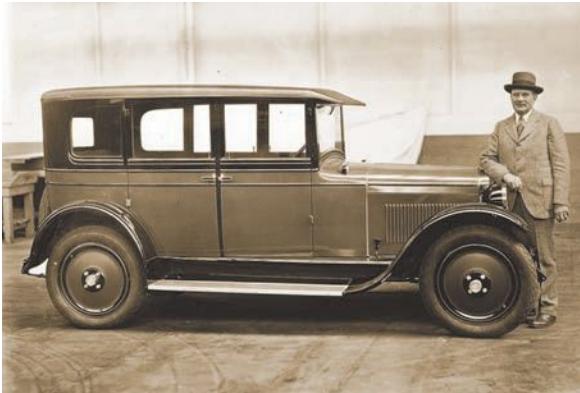
now-famous "680" series—introduced for 1918. Some years later, after getting the company established and running smoothly, Nash tried to enter the lower-priced markets with a line of four-cylinder cars, introduced for 1921. They happened to be excellent cars, but with a starting price of \$1,395, they struggled to compete with other four-cylinder makes, and sales were only moderate.

Lowering the starting price to \$1,195 a few months later helped, as did another reduction to \$915 for a base roadster the following year. However, the Nash Four never found the success Charles was looking for, so for 1925 he decided to try something else.

Since Nash couldn't hope to compete with the lowest-priced cars, Ford and Chevrolet, he decided to come out with a low-priced six-cylinder model. To save on tooling, it would be offered only in two styles—a four-door sedan and a touring car, both of them seating five passengers. The new car would be simple yet loaded with features normally seen in higher-priced cars, and it would represent real value in its field. Nash decided to call it the Ajax.

Ajax, as you may know, was a mythological Greek hero depicted in Homer's Iliad. After Achilles' death, both Ajax and his rival Odysseus claimed the right to Achilles' magic armor. But after mulling things over, the gods decided in Odysseus's favor, and Ajax, ashamed of his failure, killed himself, supposedly by falling on his sword. Such is the fate of failures, at least in classic myths.

But Nash's Ajax was sure to be a hero—



that's probably why he decided to give it that name in the first place. It was a splendid car for its price, boasting a 170 cubic-inch straight-six engine that featured seven main bearings, which was big news in this price range. It had a trim 109-inch wheelbase and, everywhere one looked, the outstanding quality that Nash was famous for. All this cost buyers a mere \$995 for the four-door, six-window sedan, or \$935 for the touring car, each one demonstrating unquestionable value.

However, even though auto writers of the day loved the new Ajax and raved about its many virtues, sales of the new car came in below expectations,

with only about 25,000 produced. Buyers loved them; dealers loved them. But they just weren't generating the sales volume they should have.

Nash really liked the Ajax name, probably because it appealed to the little boy inside him, but after thinking it over, he concluded that his small car would sell better if it were called a Nash. So in mid-1926, the company announced it was renaming the Ajax as the Nash Light Six. To enable dealers to change over cars they had in stock, the factory shipped them new Nash badges to replace the Ajax ones. And Charles, ever conscious of value, had extra badges sent so that any Ajax owner who wanted to switch the name on his car to Nash would be able to drive into his local dealer and get it done easily. That way, no one had to worry about their car losing value simply because the brand was no longer made. Charlie Nash was nice that way.

So in mid-1926, the Ajax brand faded away and the new Nash Light Six took its place and, voilà, sales picked up. We couldn't find a breakout of Nash sales by model, but total Nash sales for 1926 rose about 60 percent over 1925 and surely a lot of those were Light Sixes.

It could have been handled differently. In today's heartless auto market, the brand probably would have been dropped right away, with existing owners left to ponder the reduced value of their purchases. But Nash—man and company—were both big enough to admit making a mistake, and smart enough to come up with a fix that satisfied everyone. ☀

Even though
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and raved
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trim, including the bezels of "regulation" Oldsmobile taillamps. This car appeared in my small Ohio hometown sometime during the war and remained on the scene as someone else's vehicle until well after VJ day.

James Wagner
Plymouth, Michigan

I ENJOYED JIM RICHARDSON'S article in *HCC* #130 about Victoria Hearst's "updated" 1965 Corvette, presumably modified to have modern electronic ignition, fuel injection, etc. Richardson correctly states the dilemma between restoring a collectible car to original condition versus giving it modern operational convenience and performance.

I have several collector cars, some original, a couple not. I have passed all eight Master Mechanic ASE exams twice, so I understand the nature and appeal of such modifications. I have heard, time and again, the old saw "They don't make 'em like they used to." That is correct, and thank goodness for that!

I have had a 1966 GTO convertible with three deuces since 1979. There is nothing like opening the hood and seeing those three air cleaners sitting up so pretty. There is nothing like stomping on the accelerator pedal and hearing the sucking roar as the front fenders lurch in oppositional torque and the rear tires grab desperately for traction, all the while being pinned tightly to the seatback! But, compared to modern electronic fuel injection, the carburetor is a toilet bowl. It is wasteful and messy and trouble-prone. My new modern car requires almost no maintenance, is almost as fast and gets much better gas mileage.

I had to take the GTO off the road in 1986 due to multiple problems. Since then, I installed a suspension system that lowered the car and the front-end roll center about three inches, added Firebird power disc brakes and spindles, factory A/C (mutually exclusive of "three deuces"), a custom interior with red leather bolsters, a bright red top, and bright yellow paint that puts the washed-out stock yellow to shame. I also had installed 15 x 7 reproduction Rallye I wheels, painted red, with radial tires and a Richmond Gear five-speed transmission behind a 400-cu.in. block with a 2.96-gear Posi

rear end. In other words, my GTO will do now what it would not do when it came from the factory: corner and stop! It will also run like a scalded dog.

When asked once why I painted the GTO bright yellow, my reply was, "Because I can!" I don't really care what anyone else thinks about my car. I know I am a lot safer than I was, and it is much more comfortable to operate.

So, I have no beef with those who want to "keep things real." I also have no beef with anyone who wants to modify their own car any way they wish.

H. Watkins Ellerson
Hadensville, Virginia

Jim Richardson replies:

I was interested in what readers' thoughts on the subject of restoration versus modification were, and I found out. However, I never intended to propose a law that classic cars should not be modified. That is up to the owner. I would prefer to have an authentically restored classic because I am a rather sentimental sort, and am into nostalgia and history. Readers have aptly pointed out that original old cars are virtual time machines, and can take you to periods you remember as a kid, or to places you never imagined, because you weren't born yet. I do have a Chevrolet pickup truck that is in fact a street rod, that I made out of essentially junk parts, and I love it, but I personally would not have done that to a good original truck.

I TOTALLY AGREE WITH RICHARD that driving your classic car while listening to the iconic music of the era greatly enhances the experience. I would add that resisting the temptation to modernize the guts of your car's old tube radio, thus allowing the beautiful static to crackle away, is also a must. Although I differ with his selection of the best car to represent Sinatra. Certainly, the favored ride of the Rat Pack was a black 1967 Eldorado.

John Baeke, M.D.
Solvang, California

DURING MY YOUTH BACK IN THE late 1960s, all us not-quite-cool kids without a rich daddy were stuck with old rust-buckets from the 1950s that cost about the same: around \$50. Until we could save a few bucks from pumping gas or delivering pizzas to buy a 4- or 8-track player, we would get a little more use from the stock AM radio by supplementing the single in-dash speaker with another speaker in the rear. We would also add

a reverb to the back speaker that made everything sound like it was recorded in a 55-gallon oil drum. This little box would be attached to the bottom of the dash and had two long springs inside. As the springs vibrated it changed the reverb effect, and for a 17-year-old guy trying to impress his date while driving a '54 Ford in which the road was visible through the rust hole in the floor, it was very cool... to us at least.

Oddly, I have never met anyone under the age of 60 that remembers these reverb units. As soon as stereo found its way into cars, they disappeared faster than free samples of Fixodent at the Senior Center. Have you ever run into an old reverb in your travels?

As for car music, my buddies and I had 8-tracks with the Doors, Janis Joplin, Stones, etc. But we all had one Johnny Mathis (or similar) tape stashed in the back of the case. This was for date-night. In the Detroit area, we would take our dates out to Belle Isle. We would park and watch the lights of the city reflecting on the Detroit River, an occasional freighter going by, Mathis playing in the 8-track. If things weren't cooking up fast enough, you just put a troubled look on your face and said, "I got a letter from the draft board today, but was afraid to open it. I could be in 'Nam this time next month." ... I still can't listen to a Mathis tune without getting a little... uh, never mind.

Tony Bauman
Warren, Michigan

MY MUSIC SELECTIONS ARE:

George Gershwin: Riding in the back of a 1937 Packard 1508 Twelve All-Weather Town Car, what better way to see Midtown Manhattan at night in a light rain than listening to "Rhapsody in Blue," "An American in Paris," "Summertime," etc. If you squint your eyes, everything will be in black and white.

Buddy Holly: 1959 Thunderbird convertible with cross-bar wheel covers, which represent his wild side of rock. "That'll Be the Day," "Heartbeat," "True Love Ways," "Not Fade Away." Short lived, but made a huge impact on rock 'n' roll.

Nino Rota: Wrote film music for Italian filmmaker Fellini: "La Strada," "La Dolce Vita," "Roma," "Amarcord," etc. Also wrote the music for the first two Godfather movies. Rota would drive a Facel Vega sports coupe—any model from the early 1960s. All models are outrageous like Rota's music and Fellini's movies.

Barry Power
Santa Rosa, California

Continued on page 40

Tomorrow Always Comes

One of my favorite movies is Roman Polanski's brilliant, cynical *Chinatown*, a noir-revival film about change that's coming to Los Angeles, and other things. There's a point in the story where Jack Nicholson's private eye J.J. Gittes asks the fabulously wealthy and manipulative Noah Cross, played by John Huston, what else he can possibly buy in this world. Cross immediately answers, "The future, Mr. Gittes, the future."

At the center of the plot is Cross's effort to buy up the San Fernando Valley, have it incorporated into Los Angeles proper, irrigate the land with water diverted from farmers in the Owens Valley, open the land to development, and make an unimaginable

sum. The script is far less than apocryphal. The tale of water diversion is long part of California folklore. Wealthy promoters wanted to drag Southern California away from citrus groves and movie sets into being a megalopolis. That meant transportation. And the transformation of the cityscape was getting underway in the middle of the 1930s, when serious planning was well underway for a highway that would change the region, and the nation.

As early as the 1890s, there were proposals to build a road that spanned the Arroyo Seco, a sporadically dry streambed that carried rainy-season water from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Los Angeles River. Given the decade, it was originally envisioned as a bicycle route. Later, the idea changed to making it a scenic parkway for the automobiles that were already beginning to choke the region. When this was all going on, remember, public transportation in Los Angeles consisted of the Pacific Electric Railway and the trolleys of the Los Angeles Railway. When investors went public with their intention to build a new trolley line from Los Angeles to Pasadena,



the parkway plan went into high gear.

The Pasadena Freeway, as it was called for years, was more than the first express highway in Los Angeles County. When it opened in 1940, it marked a waypoint between the traditional auto parkways, such as Robert Moses was building around New York, and the multi-lane freeways that would follow in the coming decades. From the moment the first cars started plying the Pasadena's pavement, the die was cast for the future of Los Angeles. For generations, it would be a car-dependent city. That's only begun to change in recent years, as Southern California has again embraced rail transportation in a big way.

It's about here where a columnist might try to explain The Meaning of

It All. There's really not that much to dissect, honestly. Market forces determined that Los Angeles would be a city of cars. Its area spread over hundreds of square miles. The people loved the independence that the automobile provided. The orange and lemon groves of the San Fernando Valley did indeed give way to houses, restaurants and shopping centers, all of them accessed by people in cars. Sure, there were issues with smog and congestion that were already making themselves evident as the freeway network expanded. But the freeways created a lifestyle—no, strike that. They created a dream of California as a bright, warm, endlessly mobile place, where people cruised from the beaches to the drag strips to their favorite burger joints.

Some pundits have claimed it was all a myth. Whatever. It's a fact, though, that the Arroyo Seco Parkway (its current official name, although nobody calls it that. In traffic reports on the radio, it's simply the 110 Freeway) was the first step in changing the way we all got around, especially out West. It was a pathway to the future. No doubt that Noah Cross would have understood perfectly. ☺

/// The Pasadena

Freeway, as it

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County. //



MY 1939 CHRYSLER IMPERIAL

four-door sedan and Glenn Miller, of course. I reckon it's a pretty good bet that Miller's smooth sound once came through the car's radio, which, sadly, no longer works.

Joe Darby
Natchitoches, Louisiana

OOF!... OUCH!... DAMMIT—

now I'm bleeding. Help! Like Jim Donnelly in his "Up by the Bootstraps" column in *HCC* #130, I, too, am mechanically challenged. Back in my college days, I had a new 1957 Plymouth Savoy four-door sedan. It was mostly serviced at shops, but sometimes I would attempt to do some "simple" repair myself. The fact that I lacked the tools, mechanical ability, experience, or self-knowledge to do these tasks was of no concern. My previous project, disassembling a Sturmey-Archer gearset off my red English racer bicycle, resulted in me taking it to a shop with the parts in a coffee can. In any case, I soon realized that automobile repair was not my strong suit. After that, I limited my car maintenance tasks to washing and, as Mr. Miyagi told Daniel in *The Karate Kid*, "Wax on, wax off." This fit my skillset perfectly, resulting in a nice, shiny car, whichever one I drove at the time.

About 10 years ago, I finally had the wherewithal to purchase a longtime-desired collector car, and Kevin H. was the proverbial "go-to guy." I knew him for many years and had seen his handiwork in restoring two Studebakers: a 1938 Commander coupe and a 1951 Commander V-8 sedan. I visited his shop near my home on Long Island, where he was working on a 1956 Sky Hawk. Knowing his skill and trusting him implicitly, we made a deal on the spot. He had been doing a complete body-off-frame restoration, and I would have to wait another 18 months until it was done.

Not being content at just flipping pages on a calendar, I'd stop by his shop from time to time to check on his progress. I really wanted to have some kind of hand in restoring my car, yet I really couldn't do anything that required skill, so Kevin handed me some sandpaper and a mask and got me going sanding the plastic filler. "Oh, goody," I declared—I can do that!" So I sanded, and sanded and

sanded until my poor skinny little arms ached. Over and over, I sanded and felt for uneven surfaces. Over and over, Kevin would show me the flaws. After a long time of doing it with not much success, Kevin, in his infinite wisdom said, "You know, Peter, you don't have to do this." He finished the area I was working on, and, in minutes, it was ice-smooth. Later on, he let me use the paint sprayer, but only with primer. Sure enough, the car turned out to be beautiful, the product of a highly skilled restorer.

Since then, I've let only highly-skilled mechanics and bodymen work on my Studebaker, although once, I did manage to replace a busted taillamp lens myself. It's a perfect #3 driver, in which I can enjoy cruising the back roads of the Hamptons every day, if I want. No bad language needed, except at all the terrible drivers here during the summer, and no bleeding or scraping my precious piano-player hands. Now there's something I can do!

Peter Lee
East Northport, New York

"UP BY THE BOOTSTRAPS" HAS

always been something of a misnomer. There are people who claim to have made it on their own, but I usually just nod and smile when I hear that message.

I have come to the mentoring process quite by accident and have found it quite rewarding. It started with no thought of a long-term relationship, just a two-hour course I called, "What is under your hood." I had one person sign up her 16-year-old son so he could learn a little about how his car worked. It turned out he was interested in learning not only how his car worked, but he liked the idea of helping me with my project.

I think Jim Donnelly is quite correct in his statement, "It takes a lot of intellect, fortitude and determination to bring back an old car." The fortitude and determination seem to come naturally to me, and I am working on the intellect. A professional I am not, but I get experience and pleasure from doing the work, and stay away from the psychiatrist's office. There is much therapy in wet sanding, the current task.

Glenn Walker
Unity, New Hampshire

I ENJOYED PAT FOSTER'S COLUMN

about the Onan-engined Westcoasters in *HCC* #128. I'm a retired postmaster, and in the 1960s, I had an interesting episode with the three-wheeled vehicle with an Onan engine called a Mailster, which was

manufactured by Rand Corporation. I was a mail carrier at that time and drove a Mailster. Being three-wheeled, they were not very stable. In fact, I turned one over on its side while making a sharp turn up a steep driveway. I got help to stand it back up, and it was undamaged, except for the side mirror. We had mirrors in stock at the post office, so I replaced it myself, and no one was the wiser. I remember the engines being very reliable, but the transmissions were very fragile. Some of these vehicles made 300 to 400 stops and starts a day serving curbside mailboxes; tough on any vehicle. They were also almost unusable in snowy conditions because of their low clearance. I enjoyed driving them, but was very happy when they were replaced by Jeeps.

Jackson Place
Lampe, Missouri

AS I LOOKED AT THE STUDEBAKER

design proposals in *HCC* #128, I realized that they were ahead of their time. However, I don't mean this as a compliment; the 1968-'70 model year proposals were an ominous warning about where domestic design was headed.

The 1968 Cruiser prototype would have been very contemporary in the very dismal year that was 1978. Downsize, overweight and underpowered were the traits that characterized cars of that era, which were as much the product of Washington, D.C. as they were of Detroit.

Studebaker had been acquired by Packard; Packard self-destructed and Studebakers remained obsolete, uncompetitive and the company was left financially challenged. A 1962 Hawk suffered in comparison to a Grand Prix; a 1963 Avanti's 289-cu.in. V-8 was no match for a Thunderbird's 390 or a Riviera's 401. If Studebaker had managed to survive into the 1970s, their product would have been more contemporary because the domestic industry had become complacent and over-regulated to the point that poor, pathetic Studebaker would have been less like an outlier.

By the way, my grandfather was the proud owner of a 1953 Commander coupe; it was a real head turner until 1955 when the competition made changes that left Studebaker behind. "If you build it, they will come."

Mark Nahmias
San Tan Valley, Arizona

The Name Game

Have you ever seen a 1954 Hudson Hornet Special? If you've been in the hobby more than 20 minutes, you've probably seen a 1951-'54 Hudson Hornet. Those are the Hornets readily identified by the youngsters we'd like to attract, thanks to Doc Hudson in the movie *Cars*.

However, if you've seen a rare, mid-1954 Hudson Hornet *Special*, you've also seen an early example of a universal marketing tool that came of age after World War II: The Name Game. It went like this: First, set the hook with a new, attractive, top-of-the-line model for prestige-conscious postwar America. Then, gradually deprecate that model name to sell cheaper, less glamorous cars... and more of them.

In our example, 1954 Hornet Specials cost about 5 percent less than standard Hornets, depending on body style. Hornet Specials and Hornets were identical mechanically, so buyers simply got NASCAR-dominating Hornet performance at a lower price, with unique Hornet Special identification, less exterior trim and a cheaper Super Wasp interior.

But Hudson was a piker when it came to taking new, prestigious model names down-market.

Consider the distinctive new two-door hardtop at the top of the 1950 Chevrolet line, the Bel Air. Within the decade, the Bel Air name was dropped to second tier, below the new Impala. It fell another notch in 1965, below the newer Caprice and Impala. Finally, when the bottom-line Biscayne was axed for 1973, three plebeian Bel Airs became the cheapest full-size Chevrolets you could buy. Bel Air went from top to bottom in 24 model years.

Ford's premium Galaxie was Speedy Gonzales by comparison; it became the lowest-price full-size Ford in less than four years! Introduced in February 1959 with its classy Thunderbird roofline, it was an instant hit. Ford capitalized on that right away. By 1962, *every* full-size Ford was a Galaxie, a Galaxie 500, or a Galaxie 500XL, although a lower-line 300 came back for the 1963 model year.

Other examples of model names brought down-market include Chevrolet Nomad, Chrysler Newport, Dodge Coronet, Ford Crown Victoria,



Mercury Monterey, Plymouth Fury, Pontiac Catalina and Rambler Rebel.

Model names were sometimes taken down size as well as down-market: Buick Century and Skylark, Dodge Coronet and Dart, Ford Fairlane, Plymouth Belvedere and Pontiac Bonneville.

Rambler was a postwar bell curve: Reincarnated

as a cute new low-price Nash in 1951, it rose to the top as half of the Rambler Ambassador name by 1958. Then it went back down until 1969, when the Rambler name bowed out for good as the smallest, cheapest car in the AMC line.

Only a few model names escaped the ignominy of going down-market. Among them were Buick Roadmaster, Hudson Commodore, Mercury Park Lane, Nash Ambassador, Oldsmobile 98, Packard Patrician and Studebaker President. They all stayed on the top shelf as long as they were produced.

Finally, surviving The Great Depression mandated that an entire company name, Packard, be moved down-market. Those of us comfortably removed from the realities of the 1930s should not judge the company's decision to be a mistake. Well-executed 1935 Model 120s, 1937 Sixes and 1940 110s kept Packard employees on the job building good, popular cars during the industry's most difficult decade.

They also enabled Packard's contribution to World War II's Arsenal of Democracy, and allowed Packard to share in the postwar prosperity that produced beautiful cars like Packard Carribbeans. As a 1956 Clipper owner and the son of a postwar-only Packard dealer, I'm thankful those gut-wrenching decisions were made as they were in the early 1930s.

Because model name depreciation worked so well for so long, you wonder why it has been discontinued. Maybe it's because yesterday's carefree, winsome model names like Bel Air, Capri, Caribbean, Catalina, Country Club, Holiday, Monterey, Panama, Riviera, Sunliner and Willys Bermuda suggest happy times, whereas today's model names like iA, 2.5SV, CT200h and XTS4 sound more like obscure paragraphs in the Internal Revenue Code.

Wouldn't you rather drive a Hornet Special? ☺

Set the hook with a new, attractive, top-of-the-line model. Then, gradually depreciate that model name to sell cheaper cars.



Factory-built Custom

*The history of the eighth 1942 Packard Darrin built—
in the same family since 1958*



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

In the years immediately preceding WWII, coachbuilding was a dying art. Precious few body builders made it through the Depression—though there was one notable exception: Howard “Dutch” Darrin.

Dutch had displayed engineering acumen from an early age. He had a knack for designing complex electrical systems, having created the first pushbutton elevator switch used by Otis Elevator, and early automotive projects included an electric gearshift for John North Willys. Darrin met Thomas L. Hibbard, cofounder of the LeBaron body company, during Darrin’s stint as a WWI pilot. Joining forces to find a low-cost builder in postwar France, Hibbard &

Darrin instead went into business for themselves. After the stock market crash of 1929, coachbuilt bodies were seen as an extravagance. Hibbard returned to the States, but backed by an Argentinian banker named Fernandez, Dutch remained in Europe through 1937. Once stateside, he settled in Southern California, and Darrin became a body builder to Hollywood stars.

Far more dramatic than that of a stock Packard of its day, Dutch’s house style was based on a convertible Victoria that



some say was European influenced, thanks to his decade and a half in France. The cars were lowered, their running boards were removed, hoods were lengthened, the split windscreens were veed, the trunk was integrated into the shape of the car, the doors featured the "Darrin Dip" beltline which helped exaggerate the rear quarters, and even the roof was a design element rather than a piece of cloth in lieu of metal. It blended formal elegance and sporting intent, and was downright sexy—not a word you'd often use in conjunction with the starchy, formal Packard. Stars went gaga for the style—Darrin built cars for Dick Powell, Errol Flynn, Al Jolson, Gene Krupa and Carole Lombard for Clark Gable.

In 1940, Darrin's work on Packard chassis caught the attention of Packard dealer Earle Anthony, who brought the style to the attention of Packard President Alvan Macauley. Packard snapped up the rights to the design and put it into limited production on Packard's top-of-the-line 180 chassis, which used Packard's 356-cubic-inch, 165-horsepower flathead straight-eight. The first models were built at the former Auburn-Cord body facilities at Connersville, Indiana, and later at Sayers & Scovill's establishment outside of Cincinnati. These 1941 and '42 Darrins had a solidity that matched their beauty.

This particular Packard Darrin, number eight of just 15 built for the war-shortened 1942 model year, sports both Electromatic transmission and overdrive. It was purchased by Louis Brooks of Marshall, Michigan, two days before Christmas of 1941. Louis Brooks was the son of Charles Brooks, inventor of the then-popular hernia truss; the Brooks Appliance Co. spun into one of the largest mail-order companies in the world in its day, with

offices in New York, London and Paris. The brothers took over the business upon their father's passing in 1913, and were successful enough to easily swing the \$4,783 price of a Packard Darrin. "According to everything I could discover, Louis was quite the *bon vivant*," says current (and third) owner, Jim McDowell of Scottsdale, Arizona. "Louis was said to be generous, as well, lending local Boy Scout troops examples from his fleet of automobiles for parades and other local events."

My brother
and I had known
about this
Packard Darrin
for several years,
and one day, we
just decided that
we had to look
into it. "

Jim believes that number eight was originally painted maroon; whether it was Cavalier Maroon or Royal Crown Maroon has not been identified, despite interviewing Louis family members in hopes of getting information about the history of the car. "I haven't been able to find a build sheet or any early pictures of the car," Jim tells us, "so unless the factory used maroon as a primer, it looks like there's some maroon under the current color."

Louis convinced the factory to repaint the car in 1953. If contemporary paint charts are to be believed, it was resprayed Topeka Tan, or some custom-mixed variant on that color. It picks up a warm glow in the afternoon sun, so much so that Jim has taken to simply referring to the color as "Sedona." At the same time, Louis also sprung for a set of Kelsey-Hayes wire wheels and wide-whitewall tires that appeared on the new top-of-the-line Caribbean convertibles. So, these items weren't with the car from new, the paint and wheels, but they were most certainly "factory-installed"—even if the factory did the work a dozen years after Louis took delivery.

The McDowell family connection starts not long after the new paint was applied. "My uncles, Don and Kenny McDowell, had a nose for where the well-known cars were all over



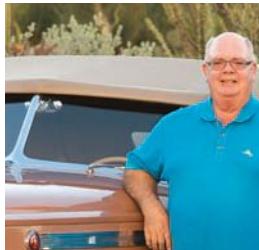


Padded dash was an unusual feature in cars of this era. Electromatic clutch models featured a red clutch pedal. Other than a few thousand miles added during driving events in the Southwest, and a previous owner's 1961 honeymoon, the first owner drove most of the miles.

Michigan. Uncle Don had been a history teacher, but later was head of educational programs at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village; Uncle Kenny was an engineer who worked at Chrysler's crash-test lab, preparing cars for testing, although he also worked for Reo and Checker over time. Between them, they owned lots of rare cars—a Kissel Gold Bug Speedster, a 1903 Thomas, Pierce-Arrows, Model A Ford racers, all sorts."

For the details of the story, we called Kenny, still alive and well and living in Michigan. "My brother and I had known about this Packard Darrin for several years, and one day, we just decided that we had to look into it. Lou Brooks was alive at that time, and we talked to him, but he didn't want to sell. We fell in love with it the first time we saw it at Lou's mansion on the hill in Marshall. He had a two-story carriage house behind the mansion that was built on a hill; you could drive in through the basement or the upper floor, where the Darrin was parked.

"Maybe a year or two later, we heard from Lou's son that his father had passed. In a strange way, Don and I had a benefit over anyone else who tried to buy it locally. The son wanted to put it up for sale, but he didn't want to have anyone locally buy it—that car was such a trademark of

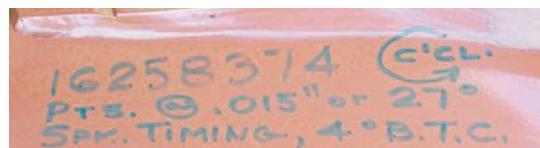
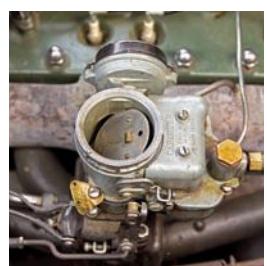


*“It’s nice
to keep it in
the family—it’s
better than a
stranger buying
it and never
seeing it
again.”*



his father's, and was seen so often around Marshall, that he wanted it to go out of town. The son didn't want a constant reminder of his father." The town of Marshall, nestled in the southeast corner of where Interstates 69 and 94 meet, was about 50 miles from Lake Odessa, which is a couple of clicks south of Interstate 96—far enough away that sightings would be rare. For \$2,300 (roughly the cost of a new Chevrolet in the skinflint Del Ray range), the Brooks family invited Kenny and Don to remove it from Marshall, Michigan.

Kenny was still a single man in 1958, but soon this changed. The Reo truck company transferred him to the Aberdeen, Maryland proving grounds, to oversee testing of an experimental amphibious vehicle. There he met Delores, who worked at the grounds, and they got engaged. Kenny decided to press the Darrin into service: "My father and I tuned it up so it was roadworthy, and we drove it from Lake Odessa to Baltimore," where the wedding took place in December 1961. "Delores and I drove that car through the Poconos, up to Niagara Falls, through Canada, and back into Michigan; we moved to Lansing at that time, to be close to Reo." Kenny and Delores have been married 54 years as you read this.



More functional than pretty at this point, the Darrin's 356-cubic-inch Packard straight-eight that came in the top-of-the-line 180-series models offered nine main bearings, hydraulic lifters and angle-set valves. Engine and transmission (with overdrive) weighs half a ton.



The Darrin's seating surfaces and door panels are all decked out in the originally installed tan-colored leather—it would look as striking with a shade of Maroon as it does with its current applied-at-the-factory-in-1953 hue, Topeka Tan. The rear seat looks barely sat upon.

It was an occasional driver until an errant valet refused to take the blame for putting a crease in the right front fender. "That really upset me, and they denied knowing it of course. I then bought a different car to drive daily, parked the Packard at Lake Odessa, and it sat for years. I had it covered up, in dry storage, but I didn't get back to Lake Odessa much. I had a family, so the car just sat. I'm sorry to say I didn't get to enjoy it much. When my parents died, Don and I decided to sell it, Jim was interested, and he bought it in November, 2008."

Jim landing the Darrin was the result of some good timing, a little bit of happenstance, and some recently redirected priorities. Jim was a part of the wedding ceremony, and long recalled the Darrin's uncommonly graceful lines. "I was into collecting cars too, for a time, but as I moved up the corporate ladder, I gave it up. My alumni association had a class called The Second Half of Your Life, which is all about how to spend time in retirement. One of the questions they asked was, 'As you were becoming successful, what did you give up to help get you there?' One of those things, for me, was car collecting. A friend reminded me about my uncles' collection, and the Darrin that I

fell in love with at Uncle Kenny's wedding, which was a car that they had just parked and never restored. I got the courage to talk to him about that car, I flew out, we talked about it, and after a couple of days, they agreed to sell. I was fortunate to get it"—in part because Don passed shortly after Jim got the Darrin, and Kenny sold most of the rest of his collection shortly thereafter.

The Packard Darrin had been idle for some four and a half decades, which is never good for a car's systems, and on the first anniversary of taking possession, Jim had a \$40,000 bill for getting the Darrin up and running. Everything had been gone through, from brakes to cooling to replacing suspension components to you name it. It's all stuff that you'd have to go through with any car, old or new, but Jim elected to get it all done in one go. Since completion, he's been on a number of Copperstate 1000 runs through the Southwest, as well as a variety of CCCA rallies. The odometer, now reading 74,000, is believed to be original. Today, it gets biweekly exercise in and around Scottsdale.

Kenny misses it, but knows that with his nephew, the Darrin is in good hands. "It's nice to keep it in the family—it's better than a stranger buying it and never seeing it again." ☀





Advanced Ajax

The origin of this stylish and innovative 1926 Nash Light Six may be murky, but it has enjoyed the care of its youthful second owner for nearly 60 years

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

How much did you pay for your first car, and what did that sum mean for you? For one 10-year-old boy, living in Moorestown, New Jersey, in 1957, \$150 represented numerous summer and after-school hours doing odd jobs for family and neighbors.

It would also prove to be his ticket to a lifetime of fun with a 1926 Nash Light Six Sedan.

This unusual car endured off-road driving, was restored by a gifted marque specialist and now represents a rare surviving example from a tumultuous time in the American automotive industry.



The Light Six wearing its original owner's repaint, circa 1963, when Bert removed the rear fenders for touch-up.

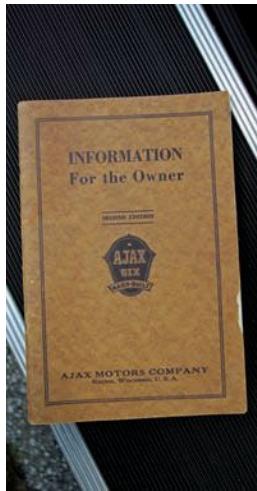
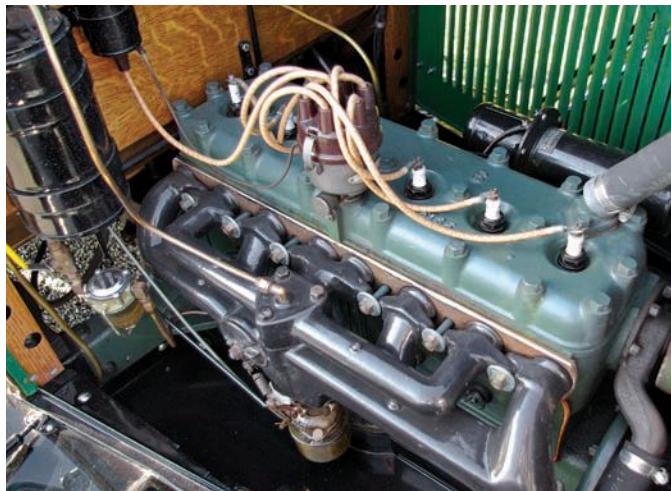
Along with other car-crazy local boys, Albert "Bert" Williams started frequenting the garage of George Wren around 1955. His curiosity was piqued by the dusty forms of two antique cars in a back corner of the shop, mostly hidden by an impenetrable wall of boxes. It took more than a year of visiting with the kindly old mechanic to convince him to uncover them, and that would prove to be a life-altering experience.

"One car was a 1926 Mod-

el T Ford rumble-seat roadster, and the other was a 1926 Nash. Neither ran, but both were for sale—the Ford cost \$500, the Nash was \$150," the Stuart, Florida, resident recalls. "I had \$250 that I'd saved up from cleaning basements, washing windows, weeding gardens and the like. I couldn't afford the T, but I preferred the Nash, anyway—I thought it looked better and had much more character. I also liked that it wasn't common, like the Ford."

That Nash soon belonging to the elementary school kid was a curious case. Bert didn't know it at the time, but this wasn't a standard Nash from Kenosha, Wisconsin. This formal-looking four-door, officially the Model 21, was actually the product of a very short-lived subsidiary called the Ajax Motors Company.

Nash Motors was growing at a rapid pace in its first decade, having gone from building 22,344 automobiles in 1917 to 96,289 units in 1925. The automaker bought shares in the Milwaukee firm (The Seaman Body Corporation) that was building its closed bodies in 1919, as well as formed its first quasi-independent subsidiary, the luxury marque of LaFayette Motors. LaFayette cars



sold in small numbers from 1920 through 1924, but while this venture wasn't successful, Nash soon tried again with Ajax Motors.

Built in the former Mitchell Motors Company plant in Racine, Wisconsin, using leftover LaFayette parts, Ajax cars were lower-priced (\$865-995, versus \$1,095-1,695) versions of the 1925 Nashes. The Ajax Six was available as a sedan or touring car, and both body styles rode on a 108-inch wheelbase. While the Six's eponymous engine featured valve-in-block construction—compared to the Nash's advanced-for-the-day overhead valves—the Ajax's inherent sophistication could be found in its seven main-bearing design, pressure-feed lubrication and four-wheel brakes. First-year sales were slow at just 10,683 units, so midway through the 1926 model year, Nash Motors absorbed Ajax Motors, and the Ajax Six became the Nash Light Six. This became the entry model, under Nash's 112-inch-wheelbase Special Six and 127-inch wheelbase Advanced Six.



This L-head I-6 engine is a correct replacement. Owner's manual is one of many original pieces of literature collected through the years. Note the body and frame tags bearing Seaman and Ajax nameplates.

The model that Bert bought is believed to be a late 1926 Light Six, as it wears the Nash emblem on its radiator shell and hubcaps, although its heritage is evident in the original Moto-Meter label, which reads "Ajax Six, Nash-built," as well as the Ajax Motors Co. logo on the serial number tag. As he would learn years later, undelivered Ajaxes were rebadged with new emblems and hubcaps at the factory, and dealers received kits with new parts to change the emblems on the cars in their stock, so it's unclear if Bert's car was one of the rebadged units, or if it was factory-built from the parts on-hand.

As delivered, this Sedan featured an ash-framed steel body painted black over Mallard Green, with gold pinstriping and velour upholstery. Behind its Budd-supplied 21 x 3.5-inch steel disc wheels were four-wheel mechanical brakes with internally expanding shoes up front and external-contracting rear shoes. Its 169.9-cu.in. straight-six engine had a 3 x 4-inch bore and stroke and single-





The original velour interior was replaced during the car's 1999-'00 restoration. The nickel-trimmed instrumentation includes amperage and oil-pressure gauges; the odometer reads 1,616 miles, but this car has driven nearly 30,000 miles in total.



barrel Carter carburetor, allowing it to develop 40hp at 2,400 RPM. The transmission offered three forward speeds, steering gear was a cam-and-lever setup and the suspension was semi-elliptical springs all around.

This Sedan was driven 28,000 miles before being parked in George Wren's garage, circa 1938. It was a one-owner car that belonged to a local upholsterer named Ed Chambers, who'd died before Bert uncovered it. It had been repainted in a non-original scheme, and while the body was solid, there were patches of surface rust on the fenders, and the wood framing was dry-rotted. The original interior was intact save for a mouse-chewed hole in the front seat bottom, which Bert would cover with a fabric patch.

"The car had not run in many years, as the Chambers left it outside one winter and the water in the engine froze, cracking the block and opening a large triangular hole in the cylinder head," Bert remembers. "After I bought it, George sealed the block and made a creative patch for the cylinder head: he put a steel plate over a cork gasket, all held in place by the head bolts. And I remember that when he pulled apart the front brakes, he found mice had nested in them!"

What did this 10-year-old do with a 31-year-old car? He'd learned to drive farm tractors at age six, so it was a natural for him to run this agriculturally-simple Nash on the dirt lanes of his family farm. "I'd drive it down through the stream and up the hill, I had a regular little race course going," he says with a laugh. "I

remember that the brakes weren't working very well when I first got it, and one time I was driving around and was headed for a tree. I had the brake pedal all the way to the floor, and I hit that damned tree, and the front bumper acted like a big spring—it bounced me 10 feet back. The impact didn't damage anything!"

Bert got his driver's license in 1964, and in 1965, he registered the Light Six for the road. "That year, I had it painted at Holmes Auto Body in Mount Holly," he explains. "I didn't know how the car looked when it was new, so I chose green for the lower body and pinstripes, black for the fenders, and white on the top of the hood, the band around the body, and the wheels. My friends used to ride around town with me. One time I think I had her up to 55 MPH, and that was a hairy experience!"

The Nash survived those youthful indiscretions, only to be stored in the family garage when Bert went off to college in 1966. He drove the car periodically into the mid-1970s, but from then, it sat immobile for about 20 years, allowing that cobble-repaired original engine to seize. Luckily, he was able to purchase a correct replacement engine in the mid-1980s, and that six-cylinder flathead powers the car to this day.

The replacement engine was completely rebuilt and installed in the car in 1997 by a now-deceased Nash expert in Lehighton, Pennsylvania, named Robert Stoudt. "By about 1999, my 1965 lacquer paint had started to flake off in sheets, so I sent the car back up to him, and although he was nearly 80 years old, he



This car's hubcaps bear Nash, rather than Ajax, logos, but it's unclear if they were factory- or dealer-fitted. The elaborate left taillamp is stock, while the right one was added for safety. Also added during the restoration were Delco-Lovejoy lever-arm shocks from a 1932 Nash.





“It amazes me I’ve kept my first car this long, considering I’ve owned more than 150 other cars through the years, but I don’t plan on getting rid of it.”



did a ground-up, nut-and-bolt restoration,” Bert recalls. “All of the body’s wood was replaced, and by then, I’d learned the car’s original paint scheme, so that is the way the car looks now. I had the headlamp and cowl lamp rings redone in brass instead of the original nickel, because I like the brass look better.”

Even in as-new mechanical condition, the Light Six is a handful to drive. “It’s geared like a tractor because the roads were mud and sand back then,” Bert tells us. “I can get about 7 MPH out of first gear and 15 out of second gear, and 30 MPH is a comfortable speed in third gear. I’ve found 35 MPH is about as fast as you want to go, because the engine starts to overheat if you push it. Also, the faster you go, the harder it is to keep in line on the road—you’re correcting the steering right and left to stay straight. At that speed, you think you’re going twice as fast!”

When this Sedan was restored, Robert installed hydraulic lever arm shocks from a 1932 Nash (the model that also donated its bumpers to the 1926 Nash), which ease the stiff, no-lean leaf-sprung ride.

Bert notes that the brakes stop well and don’t fade, although it’s fairly easy to lock the rears with excessive pedal pressure. The car is regularly exercised with short jaunts, periodically treated to fresh 30-weight non-detergent oil, and has made a splash at the nearby Elliott Museum’s annual show, and those hosted by his AACA-affiliated Treasure Coast Vintage Car Club. “I put fewer than 100 miles on it in a year, and have added about 1,600 since the restoration was finished in 2000,” he recalls.

While 38,662 Ajax Six and Nash Light Six models were built in 1926, Bert is personally aware of only 12 remaining Sedans from the two model years. The substantial investment

he made in the restoration of his is justifiable; “It was worth it to me because I love it. I’m the second owner of a 1926 car, and I don’t know how many people can say that today!” he laughs. “It amazes me I’ve kept my first car this long, considering I’ve owned more than 150 other cars through the years, but I don’t plan on getting rid of it. I’ve sure liked it a lot better than a Model T.” ☀

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	L-head straight-six, iron block/cylinder head, 169.9-cu.in.
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	40 @ 2,400
TRANSMISSION	Three-speed manual
SUSPENSION	Solid axles and semi-elliptic leaf springs, front/rear
BRAKES	Four-wheel mechanical drums
WHEELBASE	108 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	160 inches
WEIGHT	2,210 pounds
TOP SPEED	60 MPH
PRICE NEW/2015 DOLLAR EQUIVALENT	\$995/\$13,050



Javelin Dreams

Decades after first sitting in a wild Pierre Cardin Javelin and being wowed, one owner satisfies his sporting AMC itch with two 1972 Javelins

BY TERRY SHEA • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

While the 1980s and '90s did not look particularly kindly on the whims of what made fashion sense in the 1970s, today such cultural takes are again all the rage. Auto interiors penned by renowned fashion designers became *de rigueur* for some car companies during the Seventies, with their outlandish colors and patterns. In lieu of the annual cubic inch and horsepower races that were flaming out,

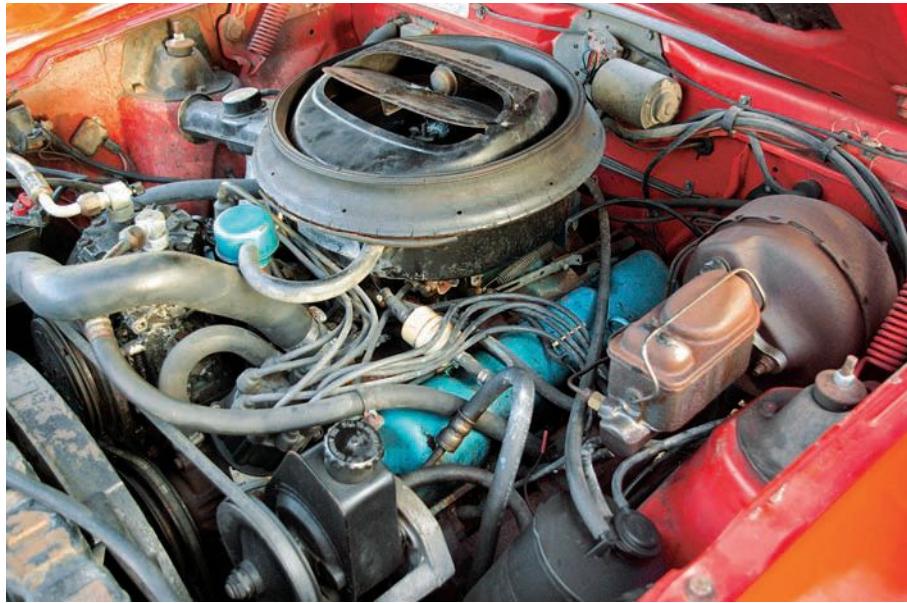
the manufacturers simply turned to another way of getting people into auto showrooms. It certainly worked to get one Miami resident into his local AMC dealer, even if he walked out with a less flashy car.

Meet Oscar Castro, a man who loves the automobiles from Kenosha. His first car was a Rambler. He has owned a Hornet and now this pair of lovely Javelins featured here, along with a Gremlin project he has just started on. But while he and his fiancée walked out of a North Mi-

ami AMC dealer with that Hornet station wagon in 1972, the practical compact was not his first choice. "I was 19 or 20 at the time," recalls Oscar, "and my girlfriend and I—we were going to get married soon the next year—we went to an American Motors dealership. We had a 1966 Rambler American and I loved that car. It was my father's car, but actually my first car after that. It was a two-door with a stick-shift three-on-the-column. We went to see the cars, and they had this Pierre Cardin

Javelin that had just come out. Holy moly! That thing looked awesome. Wow!

"I looked at it and went bonkers over the thing. Especially when you bent down and looked at the headliner—oh, man! I don't know how to explain it, but I went head over heels over that car. I am dealing with the salesman and we are talking, and all of a sudden I feel a tap on my shoulder, and I turn around and Marcia says, 'Well, honey, when we get married and we have kids, that's not a family car.'



Oscar loves the sounds that the vacuum-operated cowl induction system makes when he hammers the accelerator of the potent 401-cu.in. V-8 under the hood.

Damn! Long story short, we walked out with that Hornet station wagon."

Not that Oscar regretted buying the Hornet ("I loved that little thing! I am just sorry we sold it."), but years later, he began looking for a 1972 Javelin with the oh-so-distinctive Pierre Cardin interior, aka T-341W, in AMC option-code speak. Holy moly, indeed! As part of a series of fashion-designer penned treatments promoted with great success by AMC in the Seventies, the Cardin interior, available only on the Javelin—and only in 1972 and '73—featured slick, black, silicone-finished, all-nylon seating surfaces, with multicolored stripes that traversed the interior, the pattern extending from one seat to the next, on to the door panels and then up and over to the headliner and back down again to the seats.

But those designer cars, largely devoid of any specific engineering advances or high-performance attributes, remained forgotten by most collectors until recently. Considered somewhat gaudy and thoroughly over the top by the 1980s, cars with designer interiors—and pretty much anything else sketched out for consumer consumption between 1970 and 1979—were a tough sell. Sure, most cars from that decade found a tough time with even used-car buyers, let alone collectors, and nobody seemed to be clamoring too loud-

ly for new versions of these treatments.

With more than 40 years perspective, however, it's clear that in-the-know collectors have been on to these designer suits inside cars for quite some time. More people are beginning to recognize that the automakers in the Seventies, strangled by their own inability to break through emissions-restricted performance barriers and struggling to face equally daunting safety regulations, turned to the likes of Gucci, Oleg Cassini and Pierre Cardin to turn something common into something extraordinary.

AMC got the designer ball rolling in 1972, several years before Ford lined up a series of fashion icons to put some wind in Lincoln's sales later in the decade. Along



with a Hornet that sported a brightly patterned Gucci interior, AMC launched the Pierre Cardin Javelin. Not so much a model in its own right, but an \$84.95 option, the Pierre Cardin interior breathed a rather large dose of life into the Javelin model, which in 1972 included two trim levels, the SST and the sportier, V-8-only AMX, which also carried a unique grille and a few performance add-ons, though all engine and performance options were available to SST buyers.

According to the Cardin Javelin and AMX Registry, the Cardin interior was purchased 1,262 times by Javelin SST buyers and just 14 times by Javelin AMX customers. Between 1972 and 1973, AMC produced a grand total of 4,152 Javelins with an interior from the noted French designer.

Along with giving the car its distinctive and muscular curves, AMC designers fashioned a cockpit-like interior that enveloped the driver, putting all of the controls at his fingertips and giving him a view of the gauges as clearly as possible. Both of Oscar's cars feature the optional Rally Pac instrumentation that included the "tic-toc-tach," a single gauge face that incorporates the tachometer and an analog clock together.

Powerplant choices for Javelin in '72 included a pair of six-cylinder engines



While the less-powerful 360-cu.in. V-8 in the white Javelin doesn't quite have the get-up-and-go of the orange car, it still has enough torque to keep up with today's traffic.





Through searching for a Pierre Cardin-equipped car, Oscar discovered this possibly unique 1972 Javelin SST, with a cowl induction hood normally only found on Javelin AMX models.



and a range of V-8s, from 304 through 401 cubic inches. While both three-speed and four-speed manual transmissions were offered, most buyers opted for an automatic. Both of Oscar's feature the Torque-Command three-speed automatic. Under that AMC trade name is a robust Chrysler TorqueFlite 727. AMC began using the rugged and reliable Mopar gearboxes for the first time in 1972, in place of the less-desirable Borg-Warner automatics, a practice that would continue through AMC's purchase by Chrysler Corporation in 1987.

Oscar looked for a 1972 Javelin with the Cardin interior over the years, but, as many of our readers know, if you cast your net wide and far enough, you may be surprised what else you haul in. Before Oscar could fulfill that Cardin fascination, he purchased a seemingly unique Javelin SST—the orange car pictured here—in 2002. Instead of a six-cylinder or smaller two-barrel V-8, Oscar's orange Javelin features the top-of-the-line four-barrel 401-cu.in. V-8, rated at 255 horsepower.

Although the cowl-induction hood was normally reserved for the sportier AMX, Oscar's orange SST appears to have a dealer-ordered, factory-installed cowl-induction hood, though we did not get to see the documentation. Still, Oscar reports that he loves driving the car as it is equipped: "It is just so cool when you press down and you hear the 'pffff' from the air coming in. It has a vacuum-operated flap that goes 'pffff' when you punch it. You can hear it clearly. It sounds cool."

Oscar also maintains his fondness

for the Javelin's styling—both inside and out—that lured him to that North Miami showroom 43 years ago. "I love the way they designed the bulges on the fenders on both sides," he says, "and the way the instrumentation is kind of semi-circular instead of just flat."

After missing out on a car, Oscar paid even closer attention to any magazine, classified or online listing of the model he could find. But buying the Pierre-Cardin-equipped white car shown here in 2005 almost proved to be another



“We went to see the cars and they had this Pierre Cardin Javelin that had just come out. Holy moly! That thing looked awesome. **”**



marriage-testing move for Oscar, or, as he puts it, "This almost got me killed."

Finding the same car he had missed out on previously but now being sold by its new owner, Oscar was waiting patiently to swoop in at the tail end of the online auction. The only problem was the listing's end time conflicted with an important family event. "One of my friends was having a baby christening," he recalls. "The auction was coming to close. When I do an auction—I don't like to do too much—I don't like to start bid-

ding early because that just encourages people to bid against you and bid against you, so, usually I like to wait until the last minute to hit 'enter.' It's sort of sniping.

"So, everybody was getting ready, but the auction was coming to a close. Finally, everybody was in the car and they were honking the horn. I said, 'I am in the bathroom. I'll be right out.' As soon as the auction ended—it said I was the winner—I dashed out the door. We got to the christening just in time. I mean, we squeezed in just barely, barely." Oscar

More than 40 years after he first experienced the Pierre Cardin interior on an AMC showroom floor, Oscar remains as enthusiastic as ever about the multicolored, space age stripes throughout the black interior.



The rally stripe and trunk spoiler hardly tell the story of what lurks inside this sporty 1972 Javelin. White was one of a handful of color options available for the Pierre Cardin cars.



probably did the right thing in waiting a couple of months to tell Marcia how he snagged his beloved Pierre Cardin Javelin he had wanted for more than 30 years.

While Oscar currently serves as the AACA South Florida Region's president, he doesn't go the typical show route with his Javelins. Both are largely original, with a single repaint each, and while they show their age, they both also proudly represent the best from AMC in 1972.

It takes a certain acquired taste to settle on the distinctive 1972 Javelin from AMC with so many other muscle cars out there, but Oscar has known this for more than 40 years. "If I were to take the Javelin, it would run just as good as any other muscle car," he points out. "It won with Mark Donohue in the Trans-Am series. I guess people go for the Chargers and the Chevys. There was never a TV show with an AMC like the General Lee, but there are a lot of AMC fans out there. I'm not one to put them on a trailer and take them out of state to another show. I just like driving them." ☀



W.D. Packard, younger brother of Packard founder James Ward Packard, at the tiller of an 1899 Model A Packard runabout. Even at this early date, Packard cars had a look of quiet competence and great solidity.

Packard

Automobiles of outstanding quality, innovation and distinction

BY PATRICK FOSTER • IMAGES COURTESY OF THE PATRICK FOSTER COLLECTION

Before the Packard Motorcar Company faded out of existence in 1958, it could boast being one of the oldest automakers in the world, having first produced a viable automobile in 1899. When that new business venture began, the corporation's product focus for the coming years had not been settled. Packard management faced the same question other automakers faced: Should the company be a small producer of medium-priced cars? A large producer of cars for the masses? A builder of luxury cars for the rich? The future lay open.

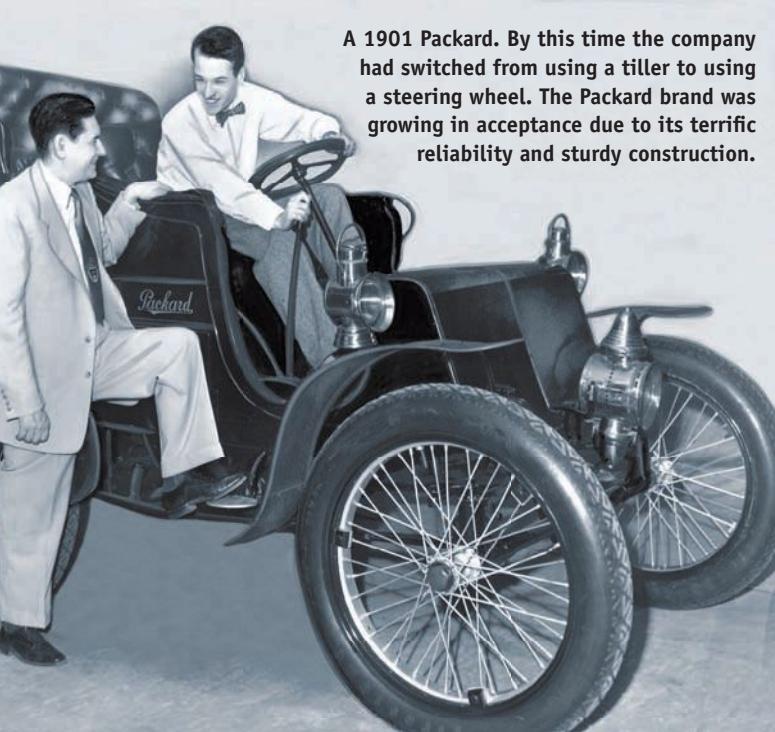
That the Packard car even existed can

be credited to pioneer automaker Alexander Winton, who in 1898 sold one of his early cars to a young Ohio inventor, business owner and auto enthusiast named James Ward Packard. When Packard later complained to Winton about the car's frustrating lack of reliability and suggested some improvements to make it more dependable, an aggravated Winton is said to have replied with words to the effect, "Well, if you're so smart, Mr. Packard, why don't you build a better machine yourself?" So he did.

After hiring away some of Winton's best men, Packard set about to design and

build an automobile the way he thought it should be. His first car, dubbed the Model A, was ready for testing in late 1899. It proved quite satisfactory, and on April 13th, 1900, the company shipped its first retail order, an improved vehicle called the Model B, to a gentleman in Cleveland.

The Packard was a sturdy, well-made car, with a one-cylinder, 9-hp engine, two-speed planetary transmission, both hand and foot brakes (unusual at the time), plus 34-inch wheels with three-inch pneumatic tires. In what would become a Packard tradition, it was innovative, with an automatic spark advance that wouldn't become com-

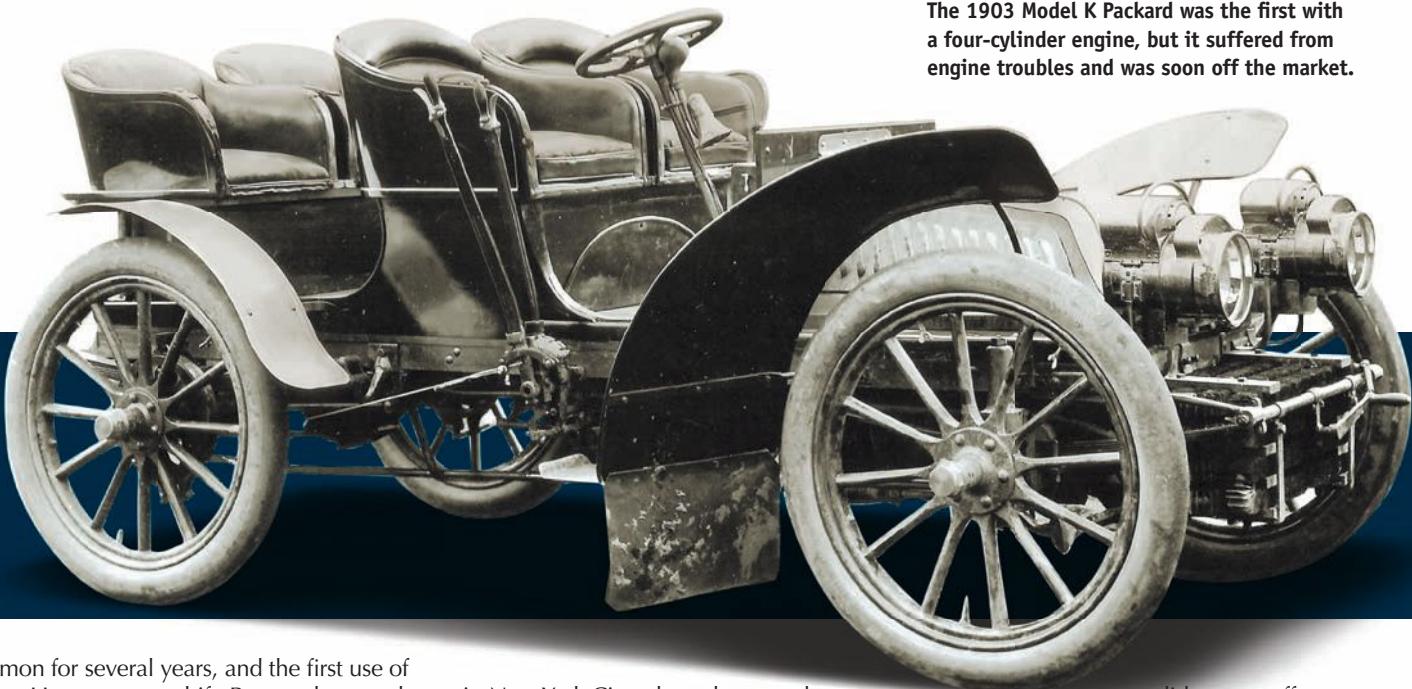


A 1901 Packard. By this time the company had switched from using a tiller to using a steering wheel. The Packard brand was growing in acceptance due to its terrific reliability and sturdy construction.



This 1903 Packard Model F is set for a fun drive in the country, with its surrey top, roll-down side enclosures, and handsome picnic baskets. Note the details of this car: flared front fenders, red leather seating, brass lamps and wood-frame windshield. Notice, too, that the crank is mounted on the side.

The 1903 Model K Packard was the first with a four-cylinder engine, but it suffered from engine troubles and was soon off the market.



mon for several years, and the first use of an H-pattern gearshift. But much more than the sum of parts was the philosophy behind the car, for Packard insisted above all else that his automobile had to be dependable and made of only high-quality materials.

The business, initially known as the Ohio Automobile Company, was based in Warren, Ohio, and for a time nearly every car sold went to Ohio residents who'd learned about them from friends or acquaintances, since Packard didn't advertise his cars initially. Then, in November of 1900, the company brought several cars to the first national automobile show

in New York City where they caught the attention of William D. Rockefeller, who bought two of them. (Fittingly enough, Rockefeller had previously owned several Wintons). In short order, Packard opened a dealership at 487 Broadway, and the car's fame began to grow, especially among the well-to-do, influenced, no doubt, by Rockefeller's purchases.

It was sometime soon after this when, according to legend, Mr. Packard's secretary pointed to a growing pile of letters from interested buyers asking for information on the Packard automobile. The company

did not yet offer a brochure, so the secretary asked what she should tell them, to which Packard is said to have replied, "Tell them to ask the man who owns one." And that, reportedly, was the birth of one of the best automotive slogans of all time.

Success poured in; a Packard was the first gasoline car to climb Mount Washington in New Hampshire, and Packards were the top two finishers in the Boston-to-New York reliability run in 1902. As expected of such success, the business grew.

The 1902 Model F featured a steering



This fine-looking 1905 Packard Model N touring car features, like all Packards of the time as well as many other American cars, a right-hand-mounted steering wheel. It would be a few more years before American automakers would settle on left-hand steering.

wheel instead of a tiller, a bit controversial back then. The company also announced the first two-cylinder Packard, the Model G, on a 91-inch wheelbase, a big car weighing about 4,000 pounds. For 1903, the Model F featured new styling, with a longer hood and larger fenders.

A minor revolution occurred when Packard introduced its first four-cylinder car, the Model K, a rear-entrance tonneau with a distinctive sloping "coffin-style" hood. *The Automobile* magazine said Model K's "workmanship, design and finish is easily in the front rank of all American cars shown." But, alas the K's engine had teething problems that were never fully resolved, and resulting complaints caused James Ward Packard so much distress that he offered to resign.

The next significant model was the 1904 L. Weighing 1,900 pounds, the big Model L is especially historic because it in-

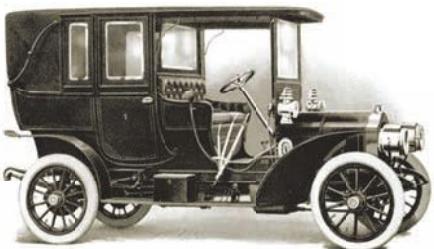
troduced the distinctive Packard "yoke" radiator shape that would remain a distinctly Packard style-mark for the coming decades. A handsome four-cylinder automobile offered in tonneau, surrey and runabout body styles, the Model L was priced at \$3,000 (about three times the cost of a Cadillac) and featured two independent braking systems interconnected with the clutch to automatically disconnect the engine before brake application.

Then came the Model N, which offered closed bodies for the first time as well as open ones, and raised the top of the price range to \$4,600 for a limousine. Built on a longer, 106-inch wheelbase, the N was a stylish and luxurious machine and proved popular. Packard continued moving upscale; its lowest-priced car, a runabout, was tagged at \$3,400. The all-new Model S that arrived for 1906 pushed the company even further up. Also known as the Model

24, the S was a larger car than its forebears, its seven body styles priced from \$4,000 to \$5,225. It could do 60 miles per hour, which was some going in 1906. Then, the Model 24 introduced another Packard style-mark: red-painted hexagonal wheel hubs.

The Packard Thirty of 1907-1912 was a mature, solidly built car that won the hearts of its affluent owners; little wonder, having gone through more than 20,000 miles of testing prior to introduction. Like most Packards to that point, each car was factory tested, tuned and adjusted to make it as perfect as man could make a car. It was joined in 1909 by a smaller, less expensive Model Eighteen.

By 1909, James Ward Packard was effectively out of the management ranks, with partner Henry Joy now in control. In 1911, Joy brought in a new general manager, Alvan Macauley, who in the coming decades would lead Packard through its



This 1907 Packard Model 30 is a limousine for the upper crust. As was common in that era, the passengers rode safe and snug in a well-insulated and sound-proofed cabin, while the driver was left out in the cold. At least in this case he had a permanent roof over his head.



The passengers of this very stylish 1912 Packard Model 18 had a choice of whether to ride out in the open, as shown here, or with the top up for snug, weatherproof comfort. The driver, however, had no such choice and had to face the elements.



Seen at the popular Town & Country Motor Lodge in Stowe, Vermont, is a 1909 Packard Model 18 Touring Car. Packards of this era weren't always style leaders but they were solid, dependable and luxurious.



This 1913 Packard Six Touring car is shown here with a woman at the wheel, which at the time was a way of illustrating how reliable and easy to drive Packards were.

most glorious era.

Packard styling and design took a giant step forward with the introduction of the



This big 1913 Packard Model 348 limousine carries very stylish lines, a permanent roof overhang for the driver and an assurance of the inherent values of the Packard brand.



Snug with its weather-tight enclosure, this 1915 Packard Runabout is a Twin Six Model 124, with power to go with its good looks.

1912 Packard Six (aka Model 48, beginning 1913). Here was the grandest Packard yet, a big fine-looking automobile, with a potent 525 cubic-inch 82-hp straight-six engine that was smooth as silk and quiet as a tomb, with wheelbases as long as 139 inches. The Packard Six was beautifully handcrafted and painstakingly finished; a dazzling achievement of the automakers art and one of the models that cemented Packard's reputation for excellence. Prices began at \$5,000 and ran up to \$6,550. A less-expensive Model 38 Six, as pretty as the Model 48 Six but with a smaller engine, joined the line in 1913.

But as grand as it was, the Packard Six was upstaged on May 1, 1915 when Packard unveiled another soon-to-be legendary automobile—the magnificent Packard Twin Six. Designed by chief engineer Jesse Vincent, the Twin Six was

Packard's answer to the competition's move to eight-cylinder power. Its 424-cu.in. V-12 engine outdid Cadillac's revolutionary V-8, not only by having more cylinders, but by being smoother, quieter and more powerful as well. Henry Joy called his new car: "the greatest piece of machinery that ever went upon the highways." The San Francisco Chronicle called it "...the greatest advance in this big industry." It rivaled Rolls-Royce in its silence, smoothness and power—many said it beat it. The public was stunned by the sheer glory of the thing.

In 1916, Charlie Nash and partner James Storrow, both recently departed from General Motors where Nash had been president, offered to buy Packard. The board turned them down.

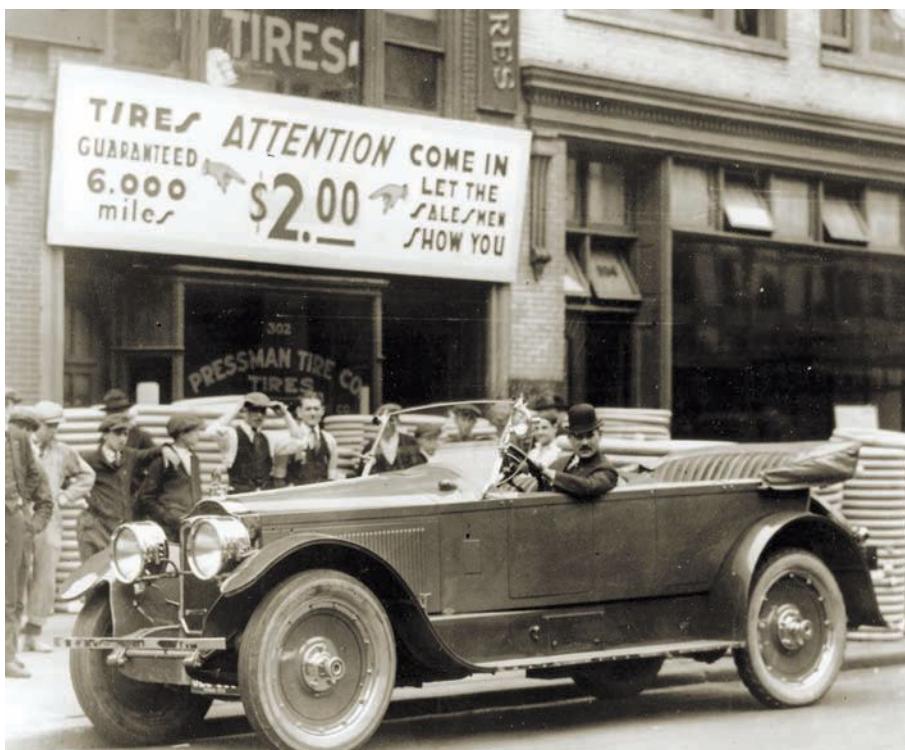
Over the years, three distinct series of Twin Six models were produced, with the final models, the Third Series (Model 3-35)



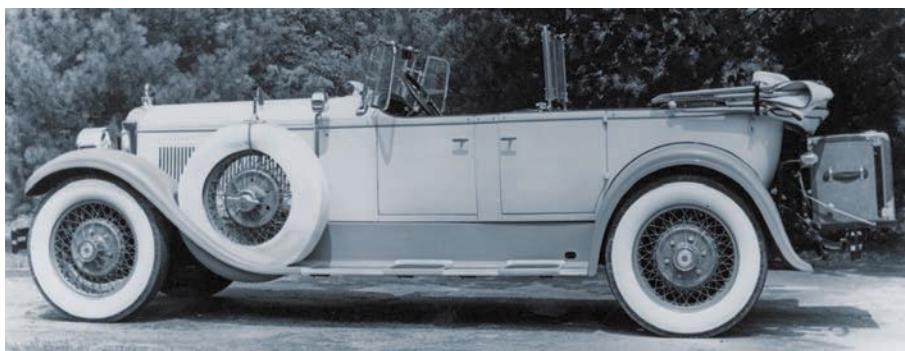
Here we see another Twin Six Packard, this one a luxurious 1916 four-passenger Salon Brougham. Notice the curtain pulls hanging in the windows, to ensure privacy when desired.



The 1921 Packard Single Six Touring Car was a fine-looking automobile, but many buyers avoided it because of its relatively high price—\$3,640. It would take Packard a few years to fix the problem.



Check out the tire prices posted on the signboard over the 1924 Packard Model 143 Touring. Notice, too, the disc wheels, drum headlamps and slanted windshield.



By the late 1920's, Packard's styling edge was beginning to show more clearly; the cars were simply beautiful. Here we see an elegant dual-cowl Phaeton equipped with wide whitewall tires, wire wheels and a luggage rack complete with trunk.

appearing for 1923. Meanwhile, a sharp recession and reduced demand exerted downward pressure on prices. In that final year, the factory offered eight models priced from \$3,850 to \$5,400, but sales were slow because by then the Twin Six was getting long-in-the-tooth. By June, it was out of production.

Meanwhile, a new lower-priced Single Six model had debuted, priced from \$3,640 for an open touring car to \$4,940 for the sedan. The purpose of the Single Six was to expand Packard's model coverage into the near-luxury territory in order to offset the drop in sales caused by the recession. However, it failed to catch on because buyers felt it was overpriced for its size.

For the 1923 model year, Packard pushed through a raft of improvements that almost completely remade the Single Six. New styling debuted on a wheelbase that was now 126-inches, 10 inches longer than before, and a seven-passenger sedan on a 133-inch wheelbase was added as well. Prices on all Single Six models were reduced; \$2,485 bought a touring car, \$3,575 a limousine. A five-passenger sedan could be had for as low as \$3,275. It did the trick, and within weeks sales were so robust the company was unable to keep up with the demand.

In 1924, the Single Six was joined by the Single Eight, with a wheelbase range of 136-inches to 143 inches. Featuring an 85-hp straight-eight engine and Packard's first four-wheel brake system, the Single Eight was priced about \$1,375 above the contemporary Single Six, or \$3,650-\$4,950. But the public could see that the Eight's prices represented real value for a high-quality car. Large, stylish and very elegant, the Single Eight was an immediate hit. In short time it was renamed the Packard Eight, and the lower line became the Packard Six.

February 1925 brought revamped models of the Six and Eight, with minor revisions to both, plus the addition of four-wheel brakes to the Six. Styling was graceful, sophisticated and very pleasing to the eye. These were the cars that Packard rode to fame in during the Roaring Twenties. From 1924-1928 Packard mostly kept to a two-model policy, Six and Eight, though each series received updates, redesigns and new styling.

The year 1927 brought much reengineering of the Eight's engine to boost output to 109 horsepower. Production rose and costs were trimmed along the way, enabling Packard to put through several price decreases that kept it ahead of Cadillac in sales volume. By 1928, both the Six and Eight were among the best-looking cars in the luxury field and boasted prices as low as \$2,285 for a beautiful Packard Six five-passenger sedan. But by late summer 1928, Packard dropped all the Six models in anticipation of introducing a new, lower-priced Standard Eight for 1929.

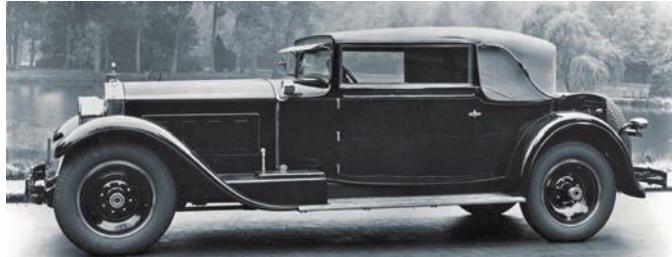
The new Standard Eights for 1929 were a marvel: big luxurious Packards with straight-eight power and smoothness combined with prices beginning at \$2,275 for a five-passenger sedan. The public went wild, and Packard sales topped 44,000 for the year.

The company also introduced the new Speedster in roadster, phaeton and sedan body styles, with prices beginning at \$5,000. Equipped with a high-output version of the big-displacement eight-cylinder engine producing 130hp, the Speedster reputedly could hit 100 MPH. These were stylish "halo" cars, thus not many were produced.

Packard ended the decade on a high



A prime example of the elegant styling and great size of Packard's is this 1928 Packard Model 443 Dietrich Touring Sedan with side mounted spare, wire wheels and pin stripes.



Another very elegant 1928 Packard is this Model 443 Convertible Victoria designed by Count Alexis de Sakhnoffsky. The large wheels and low roofline give this car a very sporty appearance.

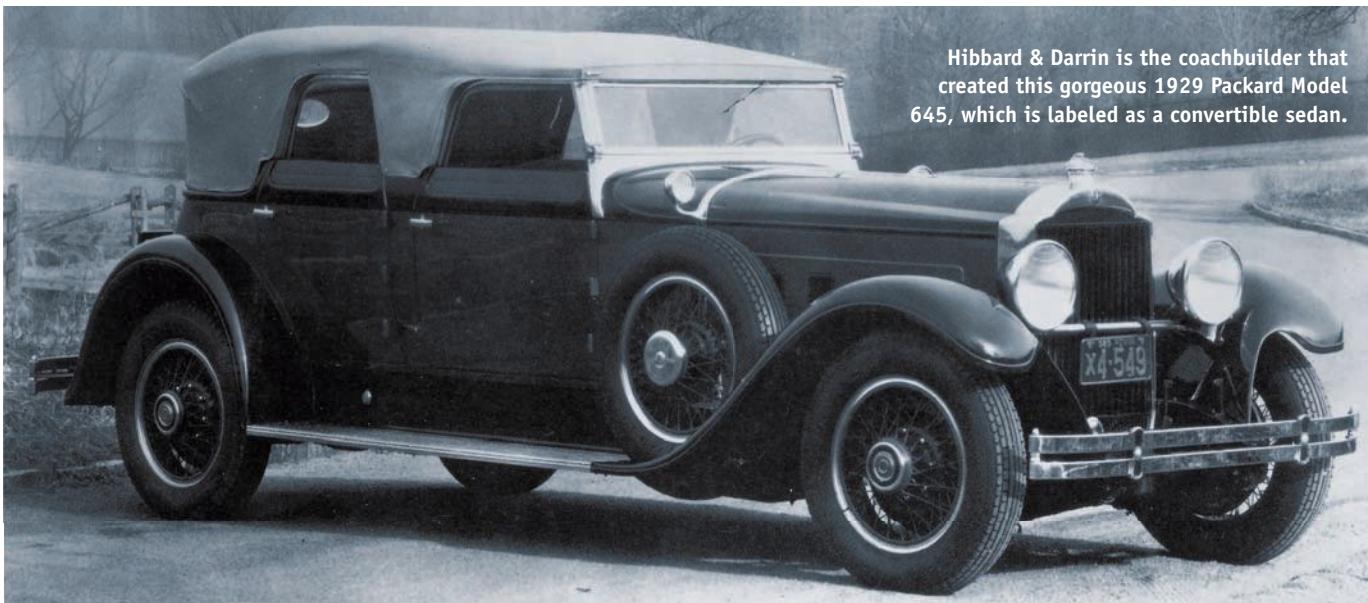


Another very stylish Packard is this 1929 Model 645 Limousine with body by the great European coachbuilder Van den Plas. Note the disc wheels; notice, too, that the roof over the driver is fabric.

note, with perhaps the best reputation among high-priced cars, sales booming, and profits rolling in. The company's financial situation was rock solid, so when a banker tried again to interest management in a merger with Nash they promptly turned it down once again.

But storm clouds were brewing. The

stock market suffered a sharp downturn on October 24, 1929, and the country began to sink into an economic depression. In the tough years to come, Packard would certainly have benefited from Charlie Nash's expertise in lean manufacturing. For Packard, the 1930s would be a struggle to survive. ☣



Hibbard & Darrin is the coachbuilder that created this gorgeous 1929 Packard Model 645, which is labeled as a convertible sedan.

Semon “Bunkie” Knudsen

The man responsible for energizing Pontiac and Chevrolet in the 1950s and '60s



BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GM MEDIA ARCHIVES AND HEMMINGS ARCHIVES

“I was called up to GM President Harlow Curtice’s office,” Knudsen told me back in 1994 when I interviewed him at his home in Florida. “He asked about my wife and children, and I wondered why this man was wasting his time asking about my family. Then he said, ‘Well, Bunkie, what I’d like you to do is take charge of Pontiac.’ So I said, ‘Fine, when do you want me to start?’”

That meeting in the summer of 1955 decided Pontiac’s fate for decades to come, as Semon E. “Bunkie” Knudsen became the youngest general manager in GM history at 43 years old. Though the conversation may have been concise, the road to Pontiac’s general manager’s chair and a GM vice presidency was not a short one.

Born in 1912 to the son of previous

GM President William “Big Bill” Knudsen (1937 to 1940—who resigned to accept a position to help the war effort), Bunkie took an interest in automobiles at an early age and proved it to his father when the elder Knudsen gave his 14-year-old son his first car—in pieces. The gauntlet was thrown down in a note from Dad—“If you can put this together, you can have it,” so Bunkie did, much to Bill’s surprise.

Proving his mettle to others became a recurring theme in Knudsen’s life. Though he surely had an “in” at GM through his father, he didn’t seem to exploit it. Instead, after attending Dartmouth College for one year then transferring to MIT where he graduated with an engineering degree in 1936, he worked in small machine shops. He finally came to GM as a tool engineer in 1939 and proceeded to impress his

Thanks to the exceptional styling, engineering and marketing and racing programs crafted by Knudsen and his staff, Pontiac captured the #3 sales position in 1961.

bosses over the next decade-and-a-half at GM’s Process Development Section, Allison Aircraft and Detroit Diesel. That fateful meeting with Harlow Curtice regarding Pontiac was actually the culmination of 17 years of professional effort.

Incidentally, general manager of Pontiac wasn’t one of Knudsen’s highest aspirations. What we know of Pontiac’s famed exploits in the late 1950s, ’60s and ’70s was not the Pontiac of the mid-1950s. The division had cultivated a reputation for reliable, but conservative vehicles, and sales reflected it. Despite the milestone of building its six-millionth



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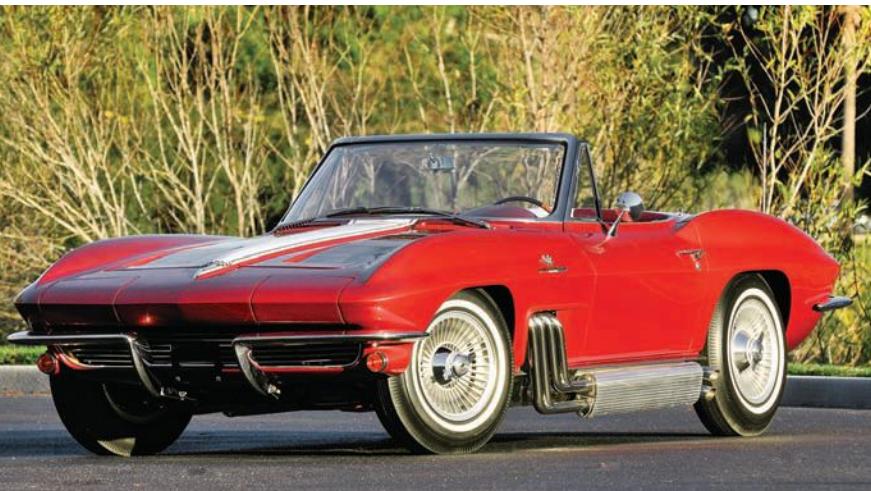
“ You can sell a young
man’s car to an old man,
but you can’t sell an old man’s
car to a young man. ”





Boasting a new body, Wide-Track and a split grille, winning *Motor Trend* Car of the Year, and climbing to fourth place in sales from sixth—Pontiac had a very good year in 1959.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID NEWHARDT/COURTESY MECUM AUCTIONS



This 1963 Corvette was built for Knudsen and is reminiscent of the blue one, built for retired GM VP and styling chief Harley Earl. It's Fire-Frost Red with a white racing stripe, has custom interior and a four-speed, and a side-exit exhaust for its fuel-injected 327.

car in 1956, Pontiac was still entrenched in sixth place, and there were rumors that it would be absorbed by Oldsmobile.

Curtice needed fresh blood at the helm and a new direction for Pontiac, and Knudsen was primed for a bigger challenge on a larger stage—both men got what they sought.

Pontiac public relations man and good friend, Bob Emerick, found humor in Knudsen's promotion. Some months earlier, Bob had moved to Pontiac, and when he told Knudsen the news, ironically, he replied, "You must be crazy—Pontiac is the poorest division in the corporation!" Now it was Knudsen's mission to change even his own opinion.

He would resuscitate Pontiac by developing models with styling, performance and engineering attributes that were more enticing to younger buyers. Over the next several years, the children of the postwar baby boom would be reaching driving

age. The profit potential for tapping into that youth market was enormous.

Successful leaders invariably possess a keen eye for spotting talent, and Knudsen was no different. He soon recruited Elliot "Pete" Estes from sister division Oldsmobile to be Pontiac's chief engineer and John DeLorean from Packard. Estes would go on to be the general manager of Pontiac and Chevrolet before becoming president of GM, and DeLorean would follow the same career path through Pontiac and as far as Chevrolet. To promote Pontiacs in various forms of auto racing, Knudsen worked with the likes of Mickey Thompson, Ray Nichels, Smokey Yunick, Cotton Owens, Paul Goldsmith, Fireball Roberts, Marvin Panch, Joe Weatherly and Junior Johnson.

With regard to production cars, one of Knudsen's first bold moves was to remove the "silver streak" hood ornaments from the ready-for-production 1957 mod-

els that, incidentally, his father put there starting in the 1930s. "Basically it wasn't a bad car, but I didn't understand why they would want to junk it all up with chrome and suspenders," he lamented. "I told them to take all that off."

He debuted the Bonneville convertible with a Rochester mechanical-fuel-injected 347-cu.in. V-8 and bucket seats in January 1957 as a halo car to get Pontiac some attention. In February, with Knudsen's support and the talents of Ray Nichels as mechanic and Cotton Owens's driving, Pontiac won its first NASCAR event at Daytona. Momentum was starting to build.

Despite the Automobile Manufacturers Association 1957 ban on racing, Pontiac still competed. "We got in trouble here and there, but basically there's always a way to do everything," Knudsen quipped. Paul Goldsmith, at the wheel of the Smokey Yunick-prepped Pontiac, won Daytona in 1958, and two additional NASCAR races were won by Pontiacs that season. A terrible recession year for nearly every automaker, 1958 saw sales sag, but market position held.

The 1959 models brought an all-new lower and wider body with the introduction of Wide-Track—Knudsen had the front wheels moved out about 5 inches and the rears 4 1/2 inches from their proposed positions. Engine size was increased to 389-cu.in. from 370-cu.in., and the split-grille theme debuted. The first Pontiac fully developed under the Knudsen regime was clearly his favorite. He recalled, "The 1959 model was new from the ground up and had an entirely different look. It was wider, longer and sleeker. The chassis was completely new and used an updated rear suspension system and was much better suited to racing than the previous model. Performance options were developed and offered to the public, and they were well received."

Both the buying public and the motor press echoed Knudsen's sentiment. The 1959 Pontiac won *Motor Trend*'s Car of the Year Award and posted an increase of nearly 57 percent in sales, vaulting the division to fourth place overall.

Another new body debuted in 1960, and the Super-Duty racing program began to show results with seven NASCAR wins and a growing reputation on the nation's drag strips.

In 1961, the new Tempest, with its innovative half-a-389 four-cylinder engine, curved driveshaft and rear-mounted transaxle with independent rear suspension was *Motor Trend*'s Car of the Year—the second Pontiac to win it in just three years. The division went on to achieve



Knudsen supported the Z11 427 drag racing program, and this is one of the most famous of those cars—the Dave Strickler/Bill Jenkins *Old Reliable* IV 1963 Impala. It won the A/FX class at the Nationals in Indy in 1963, and was a highly successful match racer in 1963-'64.

third place in overall sales, and would maintain that position through 1969.

By November, Pontiac had closed out the NASCAR season with 30 wins in 52 races, and Knudsen was promoted to general manager of Chevrolet. As had been the case with Pontiac, he remained a hands-on executive who delved into the styling details of his division's cars and constantly pushed for engineering advancement. Performance street cars and a strong racing program remained hallmarks of his management philosophy.

In 1962, on the production car side, the Chevy Super Sports gained popularity, and the new-for-1964 Chevelle and the 1965 full-size and Corvair redesigns were completed under Knudsen's watchful eye. Chevrolet broke sales records in 1963, 1964 and 1965.

Knudsen was promoted to group vice president in charge of the overseas and Canadian operations in the summer of 1965 and was elected to the board of directors. The next year, Dayton Household Appliance and Engine groups were added to Knudsen's duties. In 1967, he became executive vice president in charge of all international GM operations outside the U.S. as well as of all domestic and non-automotive and defense divisions.

Once he learned in late 1967 that fellow Executive Vice President Ed Cole was chosen to ascend to the presidency of GM, however, he felt his opportunity was lost. Following a meeting with Ford Chairman and CEO Henry Ford II, in early 1968, Knudsen was named president of Ford. Seeking the same sales success that he had enjoyed with Pontiac and Chevrolet, he employed the same methods—tweaking the new designs more to his liking, forwarding Ford's strong racing program and doing things his way.

However, Ford had its own system in place that Knudsen was unfamiliar with. Existing management also dif-

fered in opinion with him regarding the significance of continuing an extensive and expensive racing program. Since he didn't bring in his own people to fill key positions, and some of the Ford executives felt they were passed over by Henry Ford II, chief among them Executive Vice President Lee Iacocca, Knudsen became an island in a deep Blue Oval sea. The respect and support earned from GM employees and management over 29 years of impressive service meant little at Ford, because in that time he had been the enemy and now he was the boss—a situation that didn't foster loyalty.

A notable exception was designer Larry Shinoda, who had gained prominence at GM with his work on the Mako Shark Corvette and the 1963 Sting Ray. He did accompany Knudsen to Ford, and both men developed the Boss 302 and Boss 429 Mustangs as well as the Cougar Eliminator.

For the 1970 model year, Knudsen tweaked the Thunderbird's front-end design, which put some Ford executives noses out of joint, and he approved a larger Mustang for 1971 that caused some internal strife.

After just 18 months, in September 1969, Knudsen was ousted from Ford and replaced by three presidents, each in charge of a specific area—head of the automotive side in the U.S. and Canada was Iacocca.

Knudsen's next venture, also with Shinoda, was the formation of Rectrans in 1970, which sold aerodynamic Discoverer 25 motor homes built on Dodge truck chassis through select car dealers beginning in 1971. Rectrans became a division of White Motor Corporation, a truck company in Cleveland shortly thereafter, and Knudsen became its chairman. Shinoda also moved to White, but left to start his own design firm in 1975. Knudsen remained at White until his



Incoming President Knudsen with Chairman and CEO Henry Ford II (left) and outgoing President Arjay Miller, during Knudsen's brief reign at Ford Motor Company.



*Discoverer 25.
More than beautiful.
It's the beauty of it.*

After his departure from Ford, Knudsen and Shinoda once again collaborated on a different type of vehicle, the futuristic-looking Discoverer 25 motor home.

retirement in 1980.

When I met Bunkie and his wife, Florence, for the *High Performance Pontiac* magazine interview at his West Palm Beach, Florida, home in 1994, both were cordial, and Bunkie was pleased to speak of the highlights of his career at Pontiac. At the time, Florence's daily driver was a 1994 Trans Am.

Little did anyone know that just two years later, Florence would pass away and two years after that, on July 9, 1998, Bunkie would succumb to congestive heart failure at the age of 85.

Bunkie Knudsen left a legacy of a youthful performance image at both Pontiac and Chevrolet, and the development of a few legendary Fords, not to mention the production of a forward-thinking motor home. Thus, devotees of these GM and Ford models of the 1960s can trace their admiration to the man who said, "You can sell a young man's car to an old man, but you can't sell an old man's car to a young man." ☀



Rise of the Thunderbird

A youthful memory leads to the acquisition of a 1966 Ford Thunderbird Landau in need of a proper restoration—Part I: The disassembly and body work

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BRUCE MAXWELL

On paper, entering the realm of collector car ownership seems pretty straightforward. Find a vintage vehicle you've aspired to own, look it over, negotiate its purchase price and eventually enjoy endless cruising miles. The advent of the Internet makes the task somewhat easier. Pictures can reveal the tiniest of details or hide a thousand sins, but, more often than not, a car's real condition falls somewhere in the middle. It's the first stage of shopping reality. Try as we might, sometimes we walk away from

multiple examples in the quest for that one, perfect car that fits our style.

Bruce Maxwell—who winters in Scottsdale, Arizona—was optimistic when his search for a vintage Ford Thunderbird commenced. But rather than seek out a first-generation two-seater, or a performance-oriented third-generation Thunderbird from the early Sixties, he looked to his past to fulfill his needs. According to Bruce, “Growing up, my friends were into all the muscle cars, but I gravitated to the personal luxury cars, so I bought a used 1966 Thunderbird Landau. It was finished in red with a black vinyl top and black interior. When I hit the point in my life where I was nearing retirement and things were settling down, I talked to my wife about finding an exact replacement Thunderbird to have fun with.”

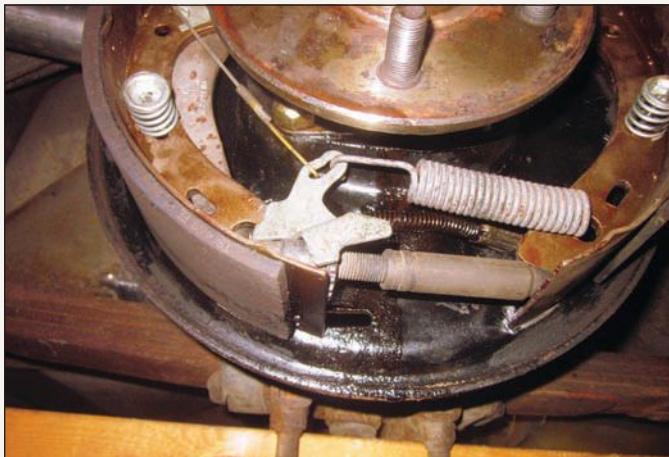
In the summer of 2012, Bruce began

his search and quickly found what he was looking for on the Internet: a correct-year Thunderbird in the right color with the right trim and interior on the right model. Located in the Midwest, he relied on photographs and a description before making the decision to attempt the purchase. Within a few days, Bruce became its new owner. “I was pretty excited, but when it finally arrived and was unloaded I realized that its condition was not matching its description,” explains Bruce. “It had been repainted, but it was far from perfect, looking almost like parts of it had been done with a brush. There was a dent on the bottom of one of the doors, the transmission leaked, the engine ran but it was a little rough.”

With him on arrival day was Ward Gappa of Quality Muscle Car Restorations, also in Scottsdale. Between the two, they

decided that, to make the Ford look and drive as nicely as it should, a restoration should be performed. “Ward had restored my 1970 Chevelle SS454 about five years prior, so I was very familiar with the quality of his work,” Bruce tells us. “All we needed to determine was how deep to go. He was honest in that there was no telling what we would find as the project started, so we agreed that if something was needed it should be done.”

In early July 2012, work commenced with disassembly. Along with his regular staff, Ward employed a number of associates who specialized in engine, transmission and paint/body work. As you might expect of a restoration, not all went according to plan. Let’s join Bruce in reliving the restoration of his Thunderbird in this two-part series. ☀



After the Ford was purchased, a complete inspection was performed, including a short drive. When smoke billowed from the right-rear corner of the car, further investigation revealed it was caused by a rapidly failing wheel bearing.



Once the decision was made to restore the Thunderbird, disassembly began in earnest. Like the pieces of exterior trim shown here, as parts were removed, they were carefully sorted, documented and evaluated.



Further inspection of the undercarriage revealed that there were other problems, bolstering the decision to restore. It was discovered that gear oil was pooling on the underside of the differential, confirming that there was an oil seal failure.



Here's another example of the subtle demerits that existed throughout the Ford: a damaged door panel. As the list of needs grew, the initial decision to refurbish the old Thunderbird "as needed" gradually swung in favor of a complete restoration.



At this point, a significant portion of the interior has been removed, exposing the vast C-pillar substructure. To the relief of the team, none of the metal in this area had been compromised by rust, nor had vermin destroyed the original insulation.



Utilizing the shop lift eased disassembly of the Thunderbird's lower exterior trim and panels. Here, the front headlamps and bezels have been taken off, along with the lower front valance, in preparation for the removal of the bumper.



With the interior gone, it was possible for the team to remove the vinyl top without putting stress on their lower backs. As that process gets under way, the last bits of the original weatherstripping are being eliminated from its channel.



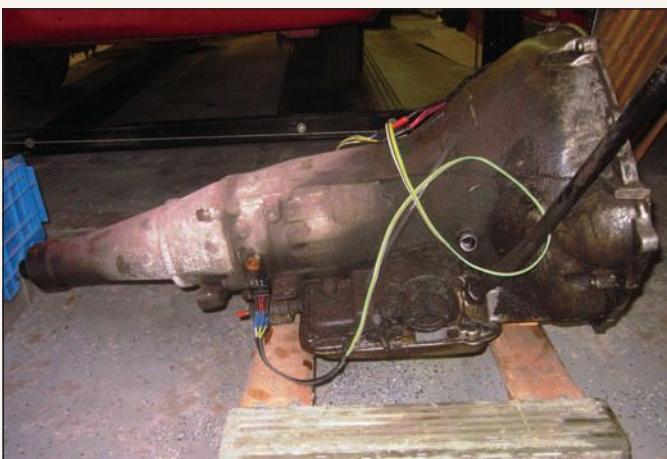
Focus quickly shifted to the trunk. It's not unusual to find corrosion below a trunk mat; however, in this case, upon its removal, nary a speck of oxidation was found. This fact ultimately helped speed up the whole process, as only a basic cleaning was needed.



In spite of earlier work by previous owners, the original FE-Series 390-cu.in. engine had been retained and repainted, which meant that when its bolt-on components had been removed to facilitate its extraction, expected minor corrosion was uncovered.



With both the engine bay and the big V-8 stripped of bolt-on and auxiliary electronics, final preparation is underway to pull the 315hp 390. A keen eye will note that the engine's intake manifold is an aftermarket piece; an OE replacement was needed.



The original C6 three-speed automatic transmission was removed from the car along with the engine and then separated afterwards. Already known to have a leak from the initial inspection, it was delivered to a transmission specialist for a complete rebuild.



No matter the body style, the driver's side floorboard sees more moisture abuse than the other sections. As fortune would have it, the rust seen here was only superficial, eliminating the need to make repairs with patch panels at a later date.



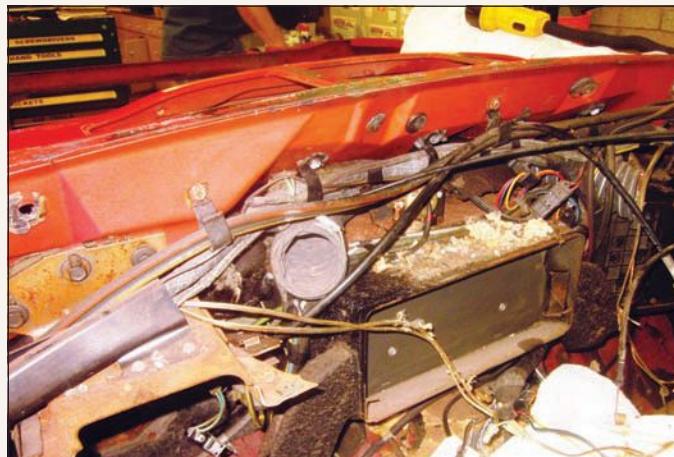
Although the Thunderbird had been able to ward off rust through the decades, the first hint of potential trouble due to rodents was discovered when the wiring harness was being removed from the body: Mice have chewed through the wiring's insulation.



Both sides of each body panel were carefully removed and inspected. Here, it's the right-front fender that's being inspected, and upon closer examination, only a trace of surface rust can be seen. Holes for fender trim are apparent near the leading edge.



Media blasting of select areas of the body eliminated both an older repaint and the factory layer, exposing bare steel. Only a few surprises were found, including damage to the driver's door, which was replaced with a perfect door from a parts car.



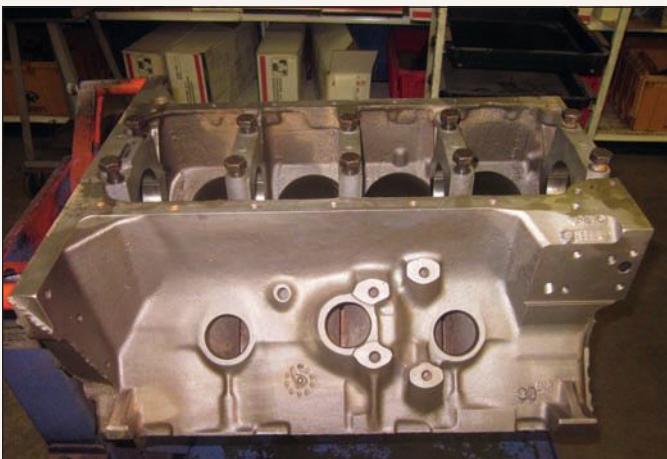
As the instrument panel and padded dash are removed, it becomes clear that small vermin had occupied its recesses. The remains of a mouse nest were uncovered; however, damage had been surprisingly minimal, in spite of the reputation of rodents for mayhem.



At this stage, most of the disassembly has occurred. To help expedite delivery to a local facility for media blasting, many of the major body panels have been reunited with the chassis, while the entire suspension system remains bolted into position.



As is often the case, the steel battery tray had corroded over time. Again, however, damage appeared to be surprisingly minimal. While media blasting revealed that corrosion had spread to a greater extent than was first thought, it hadn't migrated to the inner fender.



After the engine was removed from the Thunderbird, it was sent to an engine specialist. There, it was completely stripped, evaluated for hairline cracks and fully cleaned before the cylinder bores were subjected to a standard .030 overbore.



Each of the cast-iron cylinder heads was also cleaned, stripped and evaluated before it was rebuilt. The face of each was milled to true so it would mate with the block's surface, and then OE 2.02/1.57-inch intake/exhaust valves and OE springs were installed.



After media blasting, the battery tray was cleaned of debris. Small patch panels were fabricated and butt-welded into place, and then carefully ground flat. To help smooth the surface for a factory look, a skim coat of filler was applied and sanded.



In order to prevent the bare metal of the body panels and shell from flash-rusting, even in the dry desert climate, a protective layer of epoxy primer was applied, at which point exterior surfaces could be smoothed with a skim coat of body filler.



Over the course of the next four months, progress with regard to bodywork seemed slow. After the filler had been block sanded smooth following the common step process of using progressively finer sandpaper, a sealing layer of primer was applied yet again.



As the body received corrective treatment, smaller subassemblies were carefully restored. This is the parking-brake foot pedal and some of its corresponding linkage fully reconstructed and ready for installation when needed, saving reassembly time.



Appearing at first to have been in decent shape, both front seats needed to be reupholstered and were sent to a specialist. New OE vinyl was stretched over the original framework, while associated trim had been returned to its proper luster.



Single-stage urethane, matched to the original factory red hue, was finally applied to the body shell and other exterior body panels. Although exact details of the process are not known, it was permitted to cure before being returned to the restorer.



Back at Ward's garage, it was determined that the repaint had fallen short of expectations and it was agreed that it needed to be stripped and done over. Instead of returning to the original shop, the task was given to another specialist.



Now five months into the process, yet another application of primer revealed that not all surfaces were as smooth as they should have been. More filler in select areas was applied and continuously sanded smooth before paint could at last be shot.

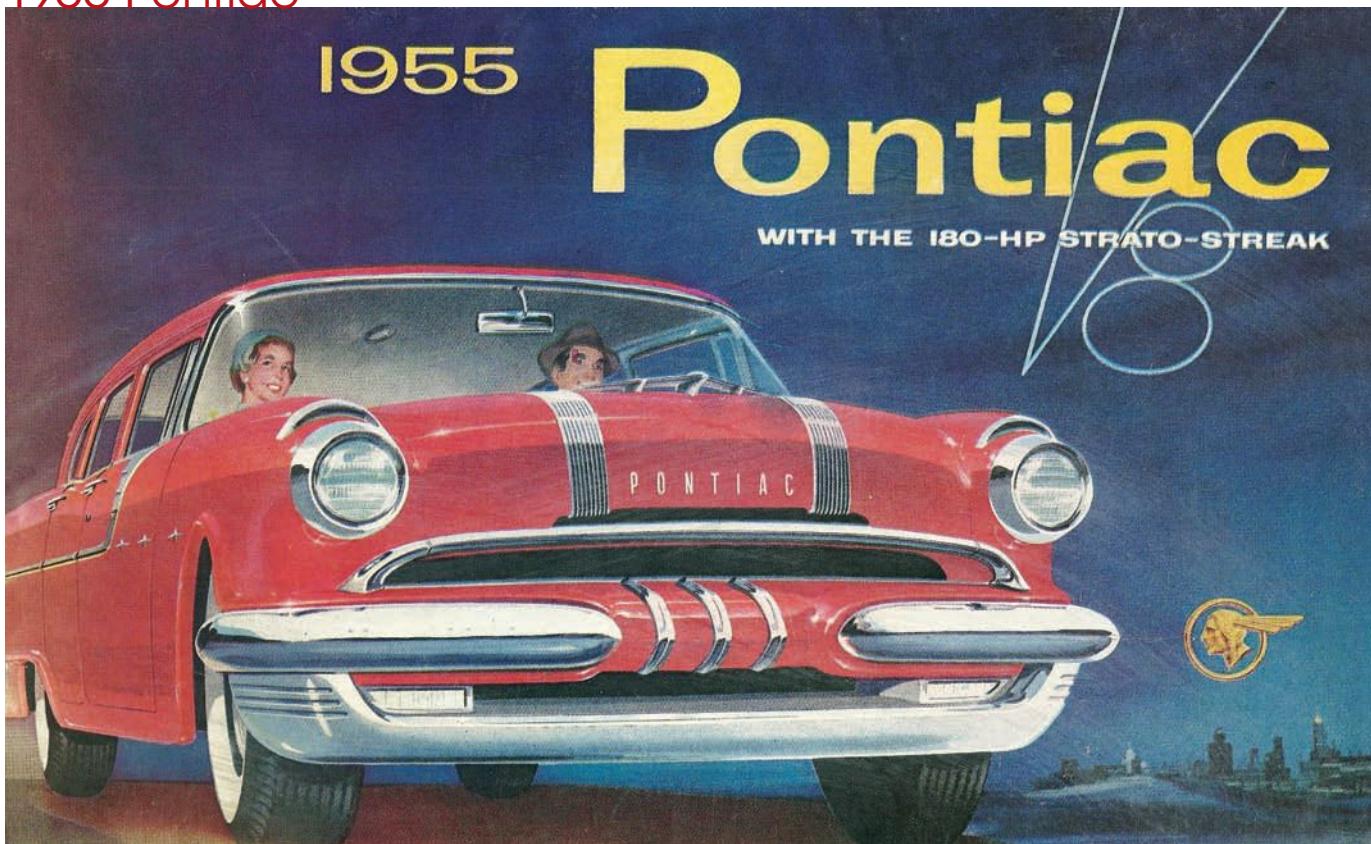


Another subassembly has been completed during the initial body and paint process; this time, the full-width taillamp and corresponding bezel. Earlier, the unit's trim had been polished and the lens carefully cleaned; new bulbs were also installed.



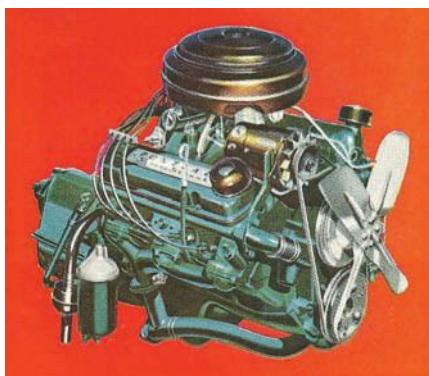
Although time was lost, the new shop embarked on correcting the paint. At the time this image was taken, the new PPG single-stage paint was being wet-sanded. Join us next month, as the restoration continues to the 113.2-inch wheelbase chassis and interior.

1955 Pontiac

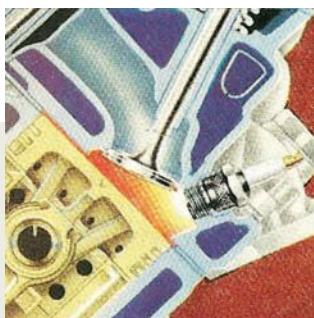


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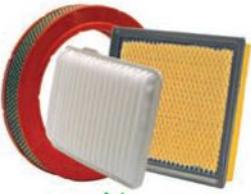
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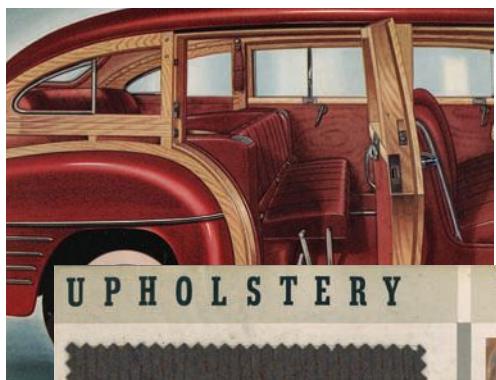
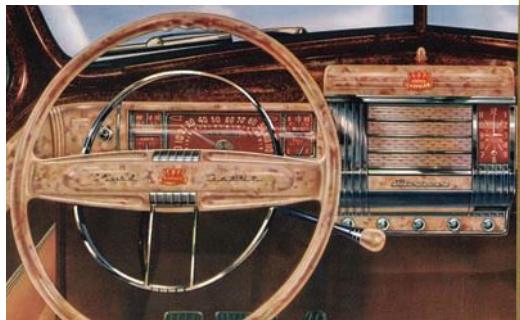
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Antique Automobile Club of America, I am in the very fortunate position of having incredible access to automotive sales literature. Each day, I am just feet away from a vast treasure trove of material. From Duryea material from the 1890s to Mini Cooper brochures from 2015, I have access to it all. On a daily basis, I handle dozens of pieces of literature, and I've seen quite a bit in my seven years on the job. While I can't say that I've seen everything in the one-million-plus-piece library collection, I can tell you I have laid eyes on the vast majority. While most sales literature is interesting in one way or another, every once in a while we get a piece that is so unusual that it practically takes your breath away. This happened just a few months ago when one of our regular visitors donated a dealer album that he acquired in late 1942 from his lo-

cal Chrysler dealership, which had used it during the model year. When it arrived at our library, all work immediately stopped as we crowded around to drool.

The immense size of this giant album is the first thing that stands out. Closed, the hardbound tome measures 21 x 27½ inches and opens to 42 x 27½ inches. The front cover features a green spine, embossed title and Chrysler logo on tan textured hardboard. When the album is opened, we see that the 26-pages are bound notebook-style, so each page can be removed if the need arises.

All five series that Chrysler offered in 1942 appear in the album, along with each body style. The Royal and Windsor series are represented first, followed by the Saratoga, New Yorker and Crown Imperial models. Each section is heavily illustrated, showing body and styling details, interior features, accessories and specifications. In

case you were wondering, yes, the Town & Country is represented on two pages that discuss features, construction and creature comforts.

The best part of the album is the interior pictures that show dash and upholstery detail. So many people restoring their cars beg for interior photos or illustrations from sales literature, and this album delivers the colorful images but goes even further by providing actual fabric samples and graphic reproductions of dash plastic colors and woodgraining patterns! Also, many Chrysler enthusiasts enjoy looking at the plaid Highlander interior, and this album includes illustrations and fabric samples of this unique upholstery. In the thousands and thousands of brochures I've looked at, I've never come across another one that provided this level of interior detail.

World War II naturally had a tremendous impact on the auto industry. During the shortened sales year of 1942, Chrysler moved only 5,292 units, dropping the manufacturer to 12th place. While its car sales were low, the quality of this dealer album is second to none. If I were tasked with creating an Automotive Sales Literature Hall of Fame, this album would easily be the first entrant into the club. If you own a 1942 Chrysler, you need to take a close look at this album. ☀



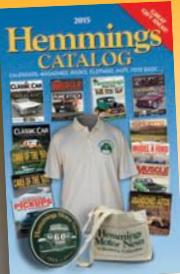
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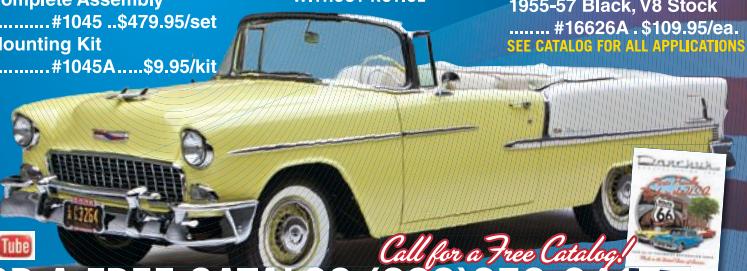
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Cheerful Chevy Chevette



FROM MY EXPERIENCE, ALL

Chevrolet Chevette owners loved their cars. I've never heard any of them complain.

While working at Baskin-Robbins in Newport News, Virginia, I had a customer who bought a Chevette. He loved it so much that he bought one for his wife, his mother and his daughter. I wish I had been related to him.

I had a coworker at Sammy & Nick's in Williamsburg, Virginia, who was working full-time and attending Hampton Institute (later Hampton University). When she bought her Chevette, she was the happiest student on the Lower Peninsula. She drove at least 80 miles a day from home to work to classes to home, for four years. She always raved about her car.

The Chevette was the best-selling small car in the United States in 1979 and 1980. They were seen everywhere for 12 straight years, so why don't we see them anymore? I find it sad that a car that gave its owners so much joy and satisfaction is not on more people's bucket lists.

Introduced in the autumn of 1975 as a 1976 model, the Chevette soldiered on through 1987. Utilizing GM's existing global T platform (the Pontiac version was the T1000, 1981-'87), the Chevette was a front engine/rear drive sub-compact car. While not revolutionary, it offered a no-nonsense form of easy transportation, with friendly mechanicals and attractive styling.

All the worldwide versions of the T-cars together totaled seven million cars sold. Along with the American Pontiac sibling was the Canadian Pontiac Acadian. In Argentina, you purchased a K-180. There were the Vauxhall Chevette, Opel Kadett, Isuzu Gemini, Holden Gemini and the Chevrolet 500 pick-up. A T-car remained in produc-

tion in South America through 1998.

The Chevette was the first American sub-compact car developed as a response to the first oil crisis in 1973. Initial work began on Christmas Eve 1973 in adopting the existing T-platform that first appeared in Brazil that same year.

Chevy learned quite a bit from the Vega's shortcomings, so the Chevette didn't share any body panels with other GM T-cars. The underbody was treated to extensive corrosion protection. The 1.4-liter base four-cylinder engine had an iron block but still weighed close to 60 pounds less than Vega's aluminum block engine.

The last Chevette, a blue two-door, was number 2,793,353. Almost three million sold, yet you hardly see them today? Yes, I'm repeating myself, but that amazes me.

At introduction, the only model available was a two-door hatchback with two inline four-cylinder engine options: an OHV 1.4 liter and an OHC 1.6 liter. Horsepower was just 53 to 70. The standard transmission was a four-speed manual; a three-speed automatic was optional. It wasn't a fast car, but in city traffic, it was enough.

The Chevette was modern by mid-1970s standards, with rack-and-pinion steering, front disc brakes, stabilizer bar up front, an onboard diagnostic system, extensive acoustic insulation and a single steering column-mounted stalk that also controlled the wipers.



The best feature was gas mileage. The base engine delivered 28 city/40 highway MPG. Models included the Scooter, a stripped down base model that few people chose, the Rally and the Woody. The Scooter came with two front seats, an optional rear seat, very little chrome and trim, painted bumpers, door pull straps in lieu of arm rests, and an open glove box. Around 10,000 Scooters were scooped up that first year. By 1977, a rear seat was standard. I would love to find one of those.

The Rally came with the OHC engine, a rear anti-roll bar and special decals. The Woody featured faux wood paneling and a more upscale interior.

A four-door hatchback joined the family in 1978 on a three-inch longer, 97.3 inch wheelbase and would quickly become the best seller. At the same time, the OHV engine and Woody package were dropped. Prices also were lowered as more standard equipment was made available.

Under the hood in 1979, a Holley two-barrel carb became standard, while in front of the hood, the familiar chrome grille replaced the slots, and a Chevrolet bow tie and square headlamps made their initial appearance. The following year, the rear was treated to wraparound taillamps and a squarer hatch.

A diesel engine was available in 1981 (it lasted through 1986), and in 1982, a manual five-speed gearbox joined the list of options with gasoline engines. Then for the 1983 model year, the Chevette styling was updated to be more modern. Bumpers were black on Scooters and base models, and painted body-color plastic on CS models. The grille was now black on most models. Scooters would not return in 1984.

In its final year, 1987, the Chevette found 46,000 buyers, which was still a pretty good number considering it was a rear-wheel-drive sub-compact car in a sea of more modern front-wheel-drive models.

Chevlettes do come up for sale every once in a while, and when their ads are shared on social media, they generate a lot of positive comments and attention. However, in the end, Chevettes don't command much more than \$2,500.

Wouldn't it be cool to show up in a Chevette? Think of all the money you'll save on gas. ☺

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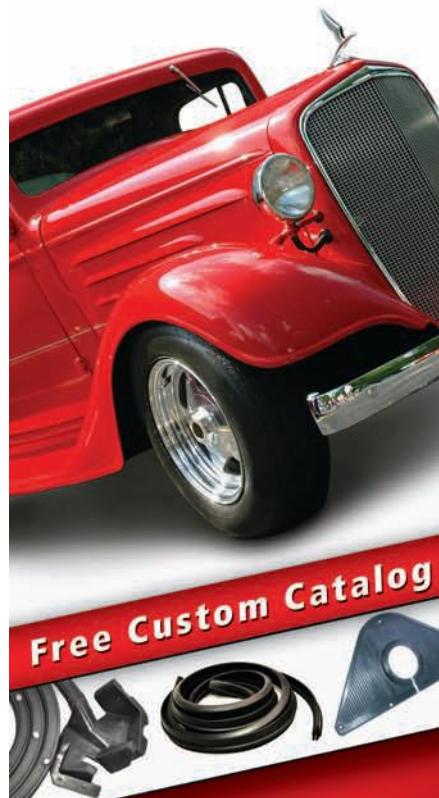
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Bill France Sr.

STOCK CAR RACING WAS

America's first major postwar sports boom, particularly in the South. The Midget car craze that dated from before World War II had faded as the cars got more expensive and fields dropped. Stock cars were a cheap alternative. There were literally hundreds of paved and dirt tracks running them, some operated by promoters who weren't always straight up with their racers.

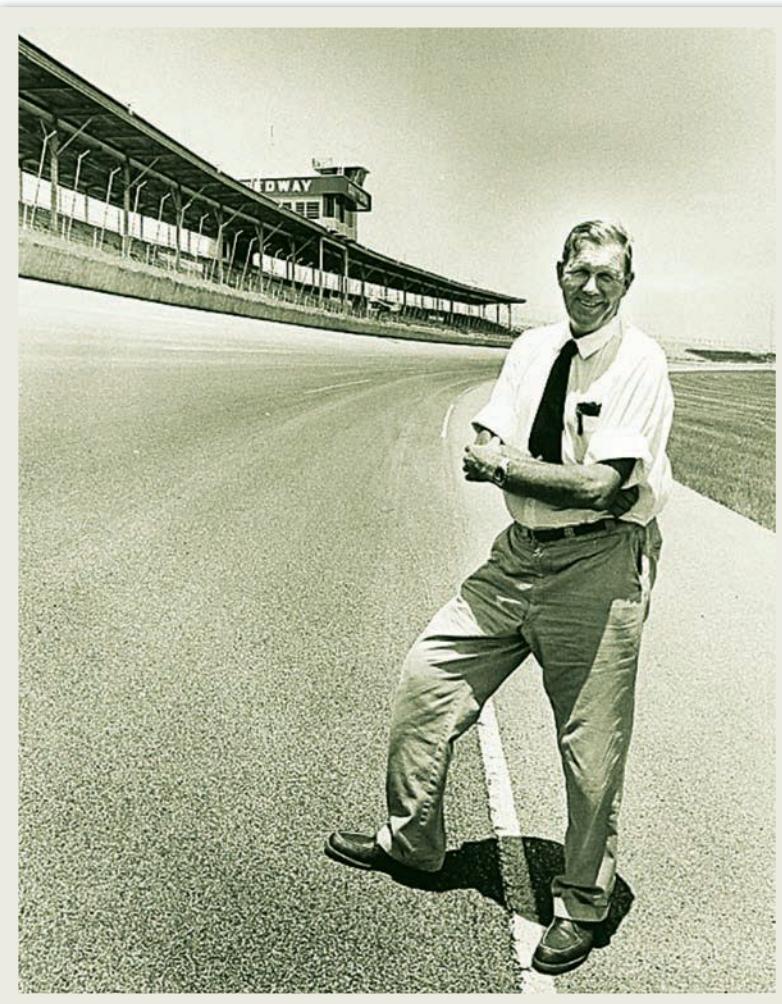
By then, William France was already a successful race promoter, having turned the beach races at Daytona from money losers into aesthetic and business triumphs. His undying legacy was the once-insane idea of trying to organize the entrepreneurs who ran this unruly sport, establish rules, guarantee purses and chase out the crooked promoters. The story's been told so many times that it's long been part of NASCAR's historical canon, but the historic fact is that not only did France succeed, but he created a whole new lifestyle in the South, which eagerly embraced racing as its homegrown sport. With the exception of drag racing, France's NASCAR did more than any other variety of motorsport to draw American auto manufacturers into racing at a time when people were crazy about cars and performance. It was all but perfect.

France was born in 1909 in Horse Pasture, Virginia, not far south of Washington, D.C. He received formal training as a banker, and actually worked behind a teller's cage for a while in the nation's capital. His true desire in life was to become an auto mechanic and a racer, even driving on dirt tracks around Washington and Baltimore. He tired of the rough winters and decided to move to Florida with his new bride, Anne, in 1934. France's original destination was Miami Beach, but his car broke down in Daytona Beach. France liked the area enough he decided to stay—not, as lore has held, because he couldn't fix his car.

The concrete-hard sands of Daytona Beach were already home to international speed trials and a local racer Sig Haugdahl was also promoting beach races. The 1936 running, in which France raced, lost a lot of money. France

was operating his own service station, but was persuaded to take over promoting the races. His turnaround ensured that they became a wildly popular wintertime diversion into the 1950s. France cut an imposing figure at a sturdy 6 foot 5, and had determination and personality to match. Not many people predicted long-term success when he and a group of promoters founded NASCAR in 1947, and while times were lean, the organization ultimately thrived. That's largely due to France's innovative idea of having a lead division of new, strictly stock cars—the forerunner of today's Sprint Cup series—that drove packed houses crazy. And that, in turn, drew the automakers like a magnet.

France was famed as a hard bargainer who was intimidated by nobody, from track operators to drivers to Detroit executives. During his lifetime, he beat back two efforts by drivers to form unions. As congestion worsened on Daytona Beach, he simply moved inland, building Daytona International Speedway, while NASCAR anchored the superspeedway construction boom of the 1960s and 1970s. When he died in 1992, France was recognized as the unquestioned patriarch of major-league stock car racing. NASCAR is part of the American social fabric today, still under control of the founder's descendants, who stand as a leading dynasty in the realm of global motorsports. ☀



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Bob Christiansen

Potential Recruit
General Motors, 1963



THE TIMING WAS LATE DECEMBER 1963. I was a senior in chemical engineering at the University of Missouri in my home state; time to be interviewing for post-graduation career employment. Interviews would take place over the Christmas-to-New Year's break.

My main career interest was in materials engineering, and I had worked with a Kansas City defense contractor in this discipline for some 36 months while making my way through college. I felt that, while my major interest was in pushing new materials developments in aerospace/defense, I should also take a hard look at the consumer products industry, specifically the automotive one as I was also already a certifiable car nut.

I had interviewed with General Motors on campus that autumn, and had received an offer to visit their Inland Manufacturing Division in Dayton, Ohio. At that time, Inland was GM's automotive plastics and rubber parts development and manufacturing site, but it also produced trim, seals, etc. for other manufacturers on a contract basis. The plant was more or less divided into two operations, one being rubber, the old carbon-black filled moldings (think engine mounts for example) and extrusions for seals and gaskets. Also at Inland were molded-in-color plastic trim items.

GM graciously arranged for a Yellow Cab to meet me at the Dayton terminal

to take me to a large downtown hotel. It would then pick me up the next morning to go to the plant. The second cab, a plain-Jane 1961 Chevrolet Biscayne sedan was trimmed in black. It had thick, black vinyl seat covering, instrument panel, etc., but had a bright turquoise steering wheel. In friendly talks with the cab driver, I inquired as to why the brightly colored steering wheel in an otherwise utilitarian vehicle. Had the steering wheel been replaced at some time? He told me that Yellow Cab in Dayton had a contract with GM to test new pieces as part of the development process. Hmmm.....interesting. Good idea for real world use, I thought.

At the plant, I checked in with their personnel department and was given my agenda for the day as to whom I'd be meeting with and when. Pretty rigorous—five technical interviews, plus a lunch.

First was the black rubber operations, where they were molding motor mounts. The engineers were quite enthusiastic that they had been able to cut out a step from the manufacturing process. Before, the process had been to form the steel plates, chemically clean them, prime them with an adhesion-promoting primer, then impress mold the rubber portions onto them to form the metal/rubber/metal sandwich we are all familiar with. But now they were able to mold the rubber onto the cleaned steel parts without the priming (and curing the primer) steps. Cost savings. Remember the big GM recall for motor mount failures in the mid to late 1960s?

The afternoon post-interviews were followed by a tour of new products they had developed in the laboratories. One was the Buick Riviera's simulated walnut woodgrain steering wheel with brushed stainless steel spokes. A very attractive innovation that caused me to remember to inquire about the Yellow Cab steering wheel I had seen. This brought both a chuckle and a gripe by the hosting engineering manager. He explained that, while high lines of GM cars had more elegant steering wheels with clear and colored segments molded of cellulose acetate butyrate plastics, the truck lines and more basic car model lines (read: Chevrolet) still used the time-honored black rubber molded over a metal ring, painted to coordinate with

interior colors of the vehicles.

The paints used would wear through on the back side of the wheel where the driver grasped it at about 30,000 to 35,000 miles, showing the black rubber base—possibly even wearing black onto the driver's gripping fingers. Inland materials people had tested newer paint systems based on tough polyurethane enamels with superior wear resistance (think gym floor finishes and aircraft paints) for the black rubber steering wheel coating system and had achieved superior results. Yes, on Dayton's Yellow Cabs.

With polyurethane and an additional coating pass at a cost of eight cents per pass, the wheels would now last "65,000 miles or the projected lifetime of the car."

Chevrolet would not pay the eight cents per car to double the coating's life. Chevrolet postulated that, at the 30,000-35,000 mile wear-through, the customer would be more prompted to trade for a new car. Welcome to the realities of product cost cutting.

In the end, I took a job with IBM's Federal Systems Division instead, spending 35 years, mostly in the development of aircraft navigation and weapons fire-control systems as well as being manager of Materials Engineering at their Space Systems Engineering Laboratory in Alabama during the Saturn V/Apollo and Skylab programs.

One last comment on the GM Inland visit. Lunch was at a nice public restaurant (I am sure for the escorting individual to evaluate my social abilities as to fit into the GM salaried employee environment). For this, we took out a "pool" car from the secured lot. Inside each pool car was a clipboard with an evaluation sheet as to what was being tested on the particular car. This car had an optional engine and was an upgraded version of the new 1964 Pontiac Le Mans. Yes, a GTO pre-production test mule. ☺

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CHEVY COIL QUIZ

Q: There was a sharp 1939 Chevrolet coupe in HCC #130, and on page 23 there was a nice photo of the engine. I own a 1940 Chevrolet and was always under the impression that 1937 to 1940 216.5-cu.in. sixes all used the same ignition coil and only that coil could be used. Meanwhile, Chevrolets from 1941-'54 used a different coil that won't interchange with older cars. The coil on the 1939 featured in HCC looks to be the newer 1941-'54 coil. Do these coils interchange and I've been wrong about this?

Carl Ney Jr.
Ashland, Pennsylvania

A: You're technically correct about the coils not being interchangeable among all of those years. The coils are fundamentally the same, but the difference is Chevrolet's Electrolock setup. On original cars, presumably like yours, there is a tubular metal case that runs from the ignition switch through the firewall and into a cap on the base of the coil. Under the removable cap is the terminal for the connection to the coil. Depending who you ask, this was either Chevrolet's early attempt at an anti-theft device or just an elaborate way to protect the ignition wire from damage, the elements, etc. A standard 6-volt coil with both terminal connections on the top of the coil will work fine, but you wouldn't need the metal casing or the cap that goes over the coil base—just a wire from the ignition switch to the coil. The original setups are worth holding on to if they're in good shape and the coil is working because they are difficult to find.

PUTTING THE OLD BACK IN OLDS

Q: I have a friend who owns a 1939 Oldsmobile two-door sedan. The chassis has been cut and sectioned, and the front suspension and rear axle aren't original. Where can I find drawings and accurate descriptions of the original chassis?

Greg Smith
Wichita, Kansas

A: The factory shop manual might have some of what you're looking for, but if the plan is to "unmodify" the chassis, you'd be better off finding an original car, shooting photos and taking measurements. Tell your friend to head to the Oldsmobile Club of America website, find a nearby chapter (www.oldsmobileclub.org/about/chapters/), join up and start networking. If you can't find a 1939 sedan to reference that way, head to an Oldsmobile Club meet and start asking around for a 1939 two-door sedan you can use as a guide. It might also be worth your friend's while to shop around for an original chassis.

CORVAT BUMMER

Q: I have a 1988 Corvette with 90,000 miles, but have not driven it in a long time because of this problem: After parking the car indoors for two weeks it will start, but then, the next morning, it may not. By not starting, I mean it doesn't crank.

Four people have looked at it, and one said to replace four items at a cost of \$2,500. I asked him if this would definitely fix the problem, but he didn't know if it would.

Peter Doninelli
Morgan Hill, California

A: It could be any number of things in the starter circuit causing this; however, the Vehicle Anti-Theft System in 1986-'88 Corvettes is notorious for these sorts of random, inexplicable "no starts."

VATS relies on the pellet embedded in your ignition key, which acts as a resistor. The amount of electrical resistance provided by the chip serves as a signal to the anti-theft module. If there's too little or too much resistance in the circuit, the car won't start. Sometimes the solution is as simple as just wiping off the key to clean the resistor. Chevrolet issued a Dealer Service Bulletin about this (88-292-8A) that recommended replacing the lock cylinder (part number 26009609) if the problem becomes chronic. It also recommended checking that the ground strap between the left-hand rear of the engine and the frame next to the battery is fastened tightly. A faulty ground could

also cause intermittent no starts.

Both Mid America Motorworks and Eckler's sell a VATS bypass, but buying the bypass requires you to know the resistance of the chip in your key. This is a service that Chevrolet dealers used to be able to provide, and I assume they still could, but you can do it yourself with a multimeter. There's a video demonstrating this procedure on the web site www.vatskey.com. Also, if you Google the phrase "Corvette VATS," you will find a great deal of information about this topic.

SQUEAKY-CLEAN MACHINE

Q: I had a 40-year career at General Motors, the first 25 years with Oldsmobile. From 1980 until retirement, I was involved in the publication of maintenance recommendations that included engine oils. I now volunteer at the R.E.Olds Transportation Museum in Lansing, Michigan. I enjoyed reading the article on the 1942 Oldsmobile in HCC #130, but I was disappointed to read that the owner is using a non-detergent engine oil. Could you please contact the owner of that 1942 Oldsmobile and ask him to use modern engine oil?

Jerry Garfield
Leslie, Michigan

A: Since the Oldsmobile we featured had a recently rebuilt engine, I agree that it would be safe to use a detergent engine oil. However, I would add that it would not hurt to use one of the oils now on the market formulated for older engines. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but when zinc dialkyl dithiophosphate levels were reduced in engine oils, there was an increase in the number of flat tappet camshaft failures, particularly after an engine rebuild, during break-in. Comp Cams addressed the issue on its website in this bulletin: www.compcams.com/Technical/Instructions/Files/255.pdf



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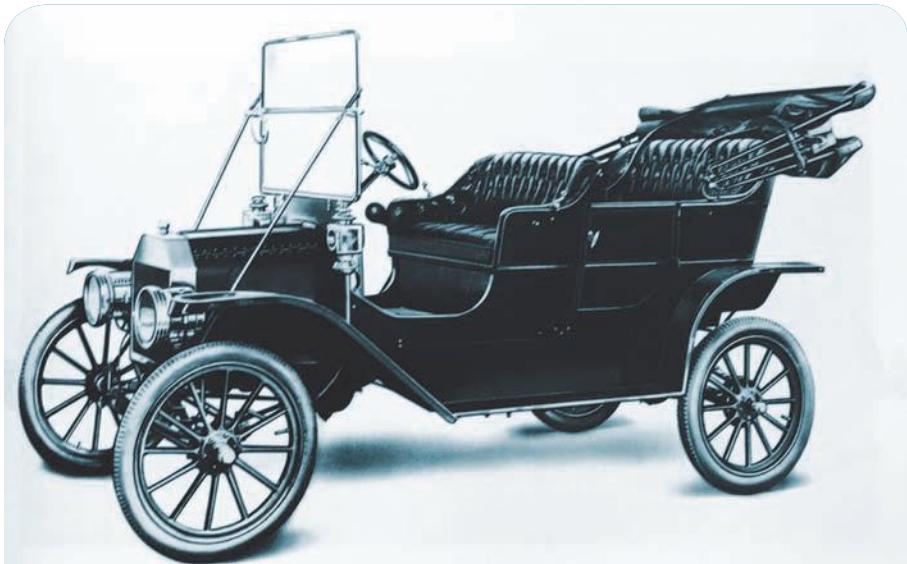
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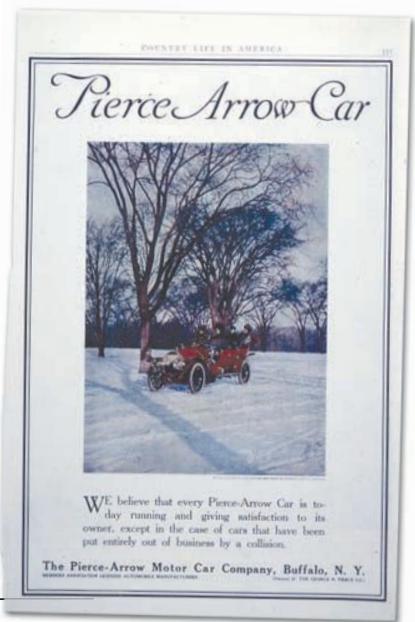


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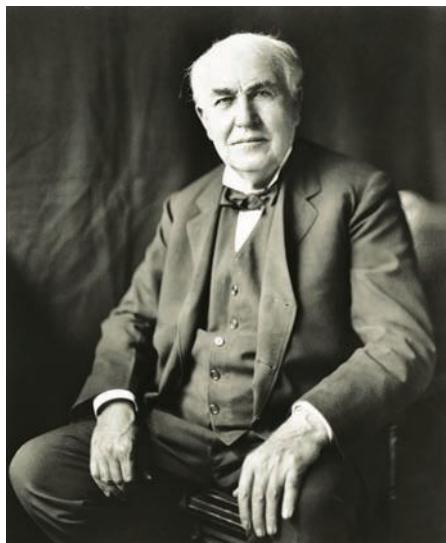
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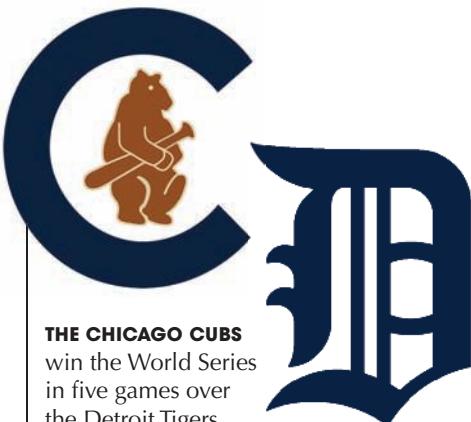
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Catalina Crush

MY CONCERN FOR SAFETY AND A

shortage of legal documentation kept me out of the big city and off main highways. Where I lived, there were plenty of gravel roads and tiny towns to explore. I found a current license plate lying beside the road, and I bolted it on my 1962 Pontiac Catalina, which revelled in its rebirth. The 389-cu.in. engine ran strong and barely smoked. The transmission never uttered a complaint.

Through that summer, my friends and I went everywhere in the Catalina. We went off-road to hidden lakes, cranked donuts in empty parking lots and smuggled three friends into the local drive-in by stuffing them in the trunk. It was okay to sit on the hood and recline against the windshield on balmy nights. Even better, girls approved of the pleasant, spacious interior.

Alas, all good things must come to an end. By the middle of August, all the components that had not been crucially dangerous when I bought the Pontiac were starting to demand attention. Brakes, ball joints, exhaust, a leaky radiator and worn steering components were starting to make the car a little scary to drive. As much as I loved that Catalina, it was just too tired to warrant putting big money into it.

Yet, she had one last hurrah left in her. The fair had come to town. This meant tractor pulls, a stock car race and a demolition derby. A rather slow-witted friend helped me prep her for the derby. On the big day, he followed me in his car, as we took back roads to the fairgrounds. One of the derby rules was that you could only have 5 gallons of gas in the tank. By the time I got to the infield, I knew I was low on fuel. We had brought five gallons of gas with us in my friend's car, so I told my mentally challenged friend to "put gas in the car," as I went and signed in.

At last, all the cars were lined up in two rows, directly across from each other. With the trunks and taillamps facing each other, the signal was given. It was on! My God, what a blast! It was the way you've always wanted to drive angry in traffic but never could. The Catalina was doing great. The back end was smashed all the way up to the rear tires. But the front end was



practically untouched. My tires were still up, the radiator still intact and even the power steering was still working. Soon, it was down to just three of us left running.

Each of us was stalking the other. We were looking for that killer, disabling front-end hit. One of the drivers, in a Ford station wagon, had mistakenly backed into a dead-end corridor. Now I had him. I was already in reverse and headed his way. I aimed for his radiator as I floored the Pontiac. She charged backwards as she sensed the kill. Then the engine just shut off, and the car rolled to a stop. I cranked it until the battery died. She just wouldn't fire back up. I believe I exhausted my entire vocabulary of swear words.

After the car had been dragged back into the infield, I started to investigate. To my puzzlement, I discovered that I had run out of gas. How could this possibly be?

I called my dim-witted friend over and said, "I thought I told you to put gas in

the car." He looked at me with a baffled expression and said, "I thought you meant in my car." Good grief. What can you say to that?

In a way, it's a fitting memory of the Pontiac. That was the only time she ever let me down, and it was not her fault. Of all the great cars I have owned over the years, that old Pontiac Catalina holds a special place. To me, it represents the foolishness and the optimism of youth. It brings back memories of warm summer nights and the camaraderie of friends. ☺



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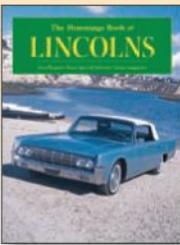
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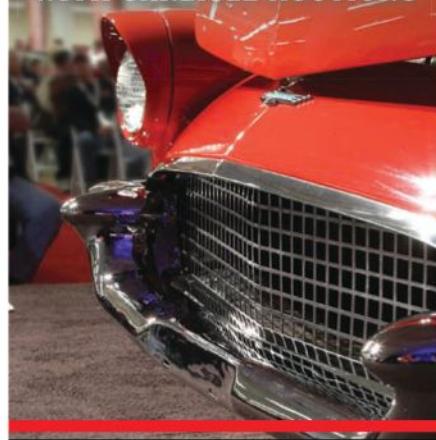


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CLASSIC TRUCK PROFILE

Heavy Hauling

*Born of a pioneer in American trucking,
this 1972 Autocar DC9364 is still on the job*



BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL STROHL

If you thought Autocar was extinct, guess again. The American independent brand, founded in 1897, is alive and well, building trucks in Hagerstown, Indiana—which qualifies it as the oldest still-operating vehicle nameplate in North America.

You're not likely to see a new Autocar hauling heavy equipment on a lowboy trailer as the tractor featured here used to do, however. A large portion of the company's business today is in building cabover trucks frequently outfitted with bodies for refuse collection, or street sweeping. Autocar also builds a line of nondescript terminal tractors used for

jockeying trailers around freight terminals.

Though it's never been a household name like Ford or GMC, heavy truck enthusiasts know that Autocar has a long history of trailblazing that dates back to the company's beginnings when it was established by Louis and John Clarke in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Clarke brothers' story as vehicle

manufacturers begins in Pittsburgh in the late 1800s, where they built among other things, a tricycle powered by a one-cylinder gasoline engine and a simple car called the "Pittsburgher." By 1907, they'd moved to Ardmore, Pennsylvania, established the Autocar brand name and around 1911 began focusing solely on building commercial vehicles.



Cummins inline six displaces 855 cu.in. and has no trouble keeping up with traffic. Clessie Cummins patented the compression release engine brake in the 1960s after leaving Cummins Inc., and partnered with Jacobs to develop what has come to be known as the "Jake brake."

Along the way Louis Clarke, a mechanical engineer, incorporated pioneering features into Autocar automobiles. For instance, his 1901 Autocar, currently part of the Smithsonian Collection, is believed to be the first shaft-driven automobile in the United States. Clarke was also a staunch proponent of locating a truck's engine under the driver to keep the wheelbase short and the turning radius tight. The 1911 Type 21 Autocar 1.5 ton was one of the company's greatest early success stories, selling over 30,000 units during the course of its more than 25-year production run. These trucks were powered by a two-cylinder engine and built on a wheelbase that measured about 8 feet.

As times changed, Autocar changed with them, developing a full-line of medium and heavy-duty trucks, known for their ruggedness. The company was taken over by White in 1953, and production was shifted from Ardmore to Exton, Pennsylvania. Autocars trucks were then aimed toward customers seeking flexible configurations, especially for heavy-duty hauling applications such as pulling construction equipment trailers, logging trailers or dump trailers. Autocars were also frequently set up as straight trucks outfitted with dump bodies or cement mixers.

Volvo purchased the failing White

Truck Corporation in 1980 and later rolled it in with the acquisition of GM's heavy truck division. The last Autocar built with an authentic Autocar cab rolled off the former White assembly line in Ogden, Utah, in 1987. After that, Autocars were Autocars in name only.

Autocar's current owners, the GVW Group LLC, purchased the historic name from Volvo in 2001 and have been building what it calls "severe-service niche trucks" ever since.

Don Berch, owner of this month's feature truck, is not a professional trucker, nor has he ever been. He's the cofounder of a firm that specializes in supplying rugged computing devices designed to be used in industrial applications, but a lifelong fascination with big trucks has led to this heavy-duty hobby. To date, he's owned and restored three big rigs with the help of friend Pat Boylan: a 1962 Autocar DC75, a 1972 W900 Kenworth and his current ride, this stunning 1972 Autocar DC9364 tractor.



Don purchased this truck in solid condition with relatively low mileage and decided to perform a "restomod" on it so that he could more easily drive it around and show it off. "I bought it three years ago on Long Island, where it was being used to pull a low-bed trailer. It was in good shape, with just 103,000 miles and only a little rust. My friend Pat restored it. He was really the force behind the project, and he's a master."

Pat tackled the tall task of converting the truck from a tandem to a single-axle tractor, making the truck more maneuverable, simplifying the drivetrain and cutting down on the number of tires needed to keep it on the road. In the process, the Autocar's original leaf-spring rear suspension and axles were replaced with more forgiving air bags and a rear axle with a road-friendly 3.70 gear set, all of which were acquired from a wrecked Freightliner tractor.

"That really made it easier to drive and also improved the fuel economy," Don said. "I can drive down the road now with the engine at 1,200 RPM."

Pat performed some metal repair work to the truck's lower cab corners before finishing the cab and front end in single-stage urethane. The chassis, meanwhile, was sandblasted and painted



in Mack Red using DuPont Imron. It's powered by its original NTC 335 Cummins straight-six with a 13-speed Fuller transmission, neither of which was rebuilt during the truck's makeover.

All of the cosmetic touches that make the Autocar shine on the road—the rear fenders, the mirrors, the horns and the exhaust—are new. The sunvisor and the grille

guard, both popular accessories on these trucks, were also added during the project, and the Autocar rolls on all new tires.

When we encountered Don's Autocar, he was part of a convoy of old trucks with the Granite State Chapter of the Antique Truck Club of America that drove from New Hampshire and made a stop to visit Hemmings Motor News. Despite not being

a trucking industry veteran, Don wheeled his Autocar around like a pro, and the truck idled, started and stopped like new—a testament to the truck's restoration as well as its tough original components.

"I'm definitely the exception here; most of these guys have a trucking background," he said. "But the truck runs and drives really well." ☀

With its new altered wheelbase and power steering, this Autocar is maneuverable and easy to drive. The 13-speed Road Ranger double-over gearbox is slick shifting once you get the hang of it.



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COMMERCIAL CHRONICLE

An Emeryville With a Difference

Hauling chemical commodities with a tough-looking International



BY JIM DONNELLY • IMAGE COURTESY OF THE RON ADAMS COLLECTION

For a city that barely covers two square miles, Emeryville, California, had a lot going on. The small suburb in Alameda County had a booming industrial district, particularly from World War II forward. A huge Sherwin-Williams paint plant and its neon signage was something of a Bay Area landmark. Shell operated a petroleum research center in one part of town. From a trucking standpoint, Emeryville was a beehive. Pacific Intermountain Express had a huge terminal within its boundaries, and International-Harvester had its West Coast assembly plant based there as well.

Emeryville produced some longstanding and impressive trucks for International. From the early 1950s, the factory turned out heavy-service rigs designed for construction, oil-field work and over-the-road hauling. From the early 1950s, its signature line-haul tractor was the snub-nosed

RDC-405, a lightweight design of which P-I-E owned a sizable bunch. In 1956, Emeryville began to build a completely new line of cabover tractors that took the name of their namesake city of origin. With their huge windshields and West Coast rigging, the new Emeryvilles were

instantly recognizable and represented a huge sales success for International.

Given their popularity with buyers, the Emeryville cabovers spawned a bunch of spinoffs with big load capacities and in some cases, dual steerable front axles. International obviously wanted

history to repeat itself, and began cranking out other specialized trucks from its California plant. There was the line of Sightliner cabs, with additional windows beneath the windshield, for instance.

Then in 1961, International decided to bring out a new line of Emeryvilles, only with conventional cabs. The tanker rig in this photograph shows such a truck. Look closely at the photo and you'll see some fascinating characteristics.

First off, the new conventionals used a modified version of the earlier Emeryville tilt cab that the cabover tractors had been using since 1956. Notice the cab. You'll see it channeled down onto the frame rails, with the same enormous windshield, drop-away side glass contours, and even a sleeper. Out front was the engine, covered by a tilt front end. As conventionals went in the 1960s, its bumper to back-of-cab length (BBC) was relatively compact. In terms of model nomenclature, the new conventional line was known as the 400 series; this particular tractor was called a D-400, although some truckers referred to the 400 as the Donald Duck Truck, probably affectionately.

This image of a D-400 was taken as it was rolling eastbound on Interstate 78 in eastern Pennsylvania in 1966. The International was owned by Greenleaf Motor Express of Ashtabula, Ohio, and it's pulling a spread-axle tank trailer. The bobbed fenders atop only the lead rear axle, whose wheels have snow tires mounted, suggest that the rearmost axle may be unpowered. The word "Latex" on the tractor's front bumper suggests that's the sort of cargo in the tank. Photographer Ron Adams noted that some tank trailers were temperature-controlled to accommodate the kind of fluid they were carrying.

There's a major departure from today's trucking visible in the photo. In the Sixties, Ron said it was common practice for carriers to letter their tanks with the sort of cargo being hauled, be it syrup, cooking oil, petroleum or acid. Today, things are different. Federal law requires motor carriers to festoon their trucks with placards approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which assigns clearly readable code numbers to all manner of cargoes, so they can be immediately identified in case of an accident or fire. ☀

 We enjoy publishing period photos of authentic, old-time working trucks, especially from the people who drove them or owned them. If you have a story and photos to share, email the author at jdonnelly@hemmings.com.

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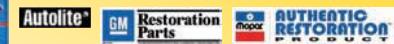
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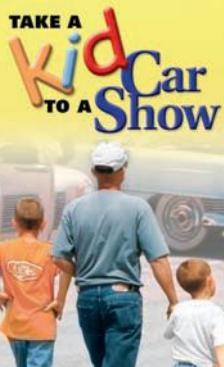


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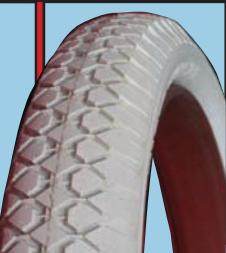
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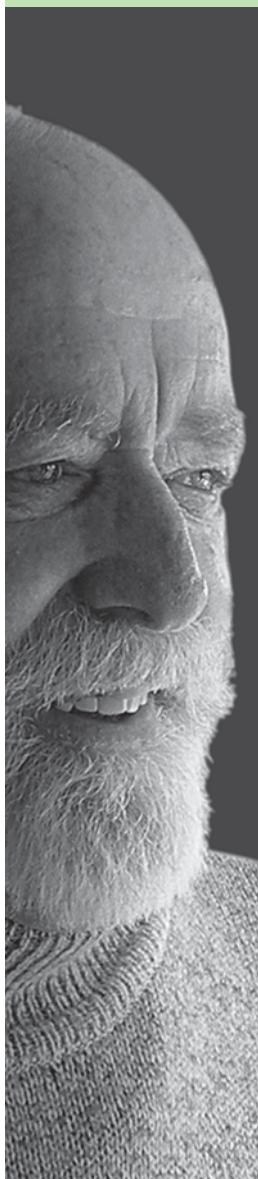
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quickly became
famous in
stock cars and
Corvettes of the
mid-Fifties, but
they are even
more renowned
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The Mouse That Roared Turns 60

The year 1955 was pivotal. Back then, I delivered the *Los Angeles Daily News* on my Schwinn Hornet, and I read up while I was folding my papers in the morning, so I know. For example, I learned that actor James Dean died driving his Porsche up through central California to race at Salinas. I also found out that the Salk polio vaccine was made available that year, and it was in 1955 that the Vietnam War broke out.

Lots of other things happened that year too, but of great importance to car buffs was the fact that in 1955 Chevrolet introduced its small-block V-8. I didn't read that in the papers, though. I discovered it while wandering the local Chevrolet dealership with my pop. He wound up buying a 210 six-cylinder stick-shift model because he knew the old Stovebolt six was a good engine, and felt that automatics were for ladies. Lots of other people were of a similar mind, because over 40 percent of the Chevrolets sold in 1955 had Blue Flame sixes under the hood.

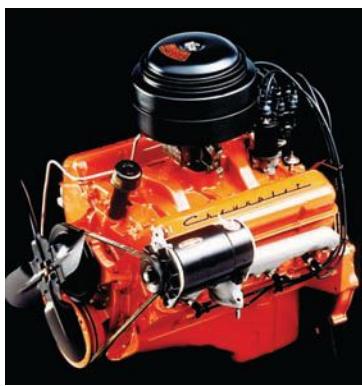
As motor heads know, Chevy's small-block was not the first modern V-8. In fact it wasn't even Chevrolet's first V-8. That had debuted in 1917 but was not a sales success. Actually, Chevrolet was late coming to the table after World War II because its tried-and-true inline sixes had been very successful.

Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Studebaker and Chrysler were all building modern OHV V-8s by the early '50s before Chevrolet introduced its V-8. Even Ford beat Chevy to the punch when it dropped its ancient flathead to debut its Y-block V-8 for 1954.

Chevrolet's small-block wasn't just new—it was revolutionary. It was lighter, more compact and easier and cheaper to produce than any of its competitors. It was 40 pounds lighter than the six-cylinder despite the fact that it displaced 265-cu.in., which was 30 cubes bigger; and it produced 162hp while the Blue Flame only pumped out 136, at best.

The new V-8 was one-upped by the big 348 in 1958 (later to be superceded by the 409). After the introduction of the Mark IV big-block, Chevrolet's big V-8s became known as "rat motors," and its small-block became the "mouse motor," named after the cartoon character Mighty Mouse.

The small-block design was ingenious. The crankcase extended only halfway down either side of the main bearings so the crankshaft hung out into the pan, saving a lot of weight. The intake manifold doubled as the lifter valley cover, and its ram's horn



cast-iron headers were very efficient.

Its rocker arms were stamped steel rather than cast, and like Pontiac, the rockers pivoted on studs rather than the usual heavy shafts mounted on posts. This made the valvetrain lighter and more efficient. Another brilliant touch was that the cylinder heads were interchangeable from side to side, simplifying production.

Combined, these attributes made the Chevrolet small-block the most successful American engine design ever with over 100,000,000 having been built, and still counting! Mr. Goodwrench still produces the Gen I 350 carbureted pushrod model, and Chevrolet still builds a highly evolved version of its small-block today.

The Bow Tie mouse motor quickly became famous in stock cars and Corvettes of the mid-Fifties, but they are even more renowned today. Besides being used in many one-off customs from Europe, like the beautiful Bizzarrinis, they were also installed in the last Studebakers toward the end, replacing the independent's own excellent V-8. And they have appeared in a lot of GM's other offerings, as well.

But bigger yet, anyone who has been to a hot rod meet in the last 30 years knows that they have been shoehorned into nearly every kind of car, including Willys, MGBs, Jaguars and classic-era Fords. Why? Because they are cheap, readily available, powerful, and tough, and more important, a major industry has developed that makes components that can turn your Mighty Mouse into Godzilla.

Small-block Chevy engines are so common at hot rod shows that I get tired of looking at them. But I don't think they are ubiquitous because rodders have no imagination. Rather I surmise it's because—while there are other engines that might be as good or better, there are fewer speed components made for them, and good used short blocks of other brands cost as much as new Chevy small-block crate engines, ready to run.

I still have my Schwinn Hornet, though I gave up my paper route for the less strenuous job of writing for magazines; and I still have a 1955 Bel Air with a small-block in it along with the optional electric overdrive; it is every bit as big, comfortable and stylish as it was in 1955. It will loaf along at freeway speeds all day long. So, I say, "Long live the mouse that roared," even if I am tired of looking at them after 60 years. ☺

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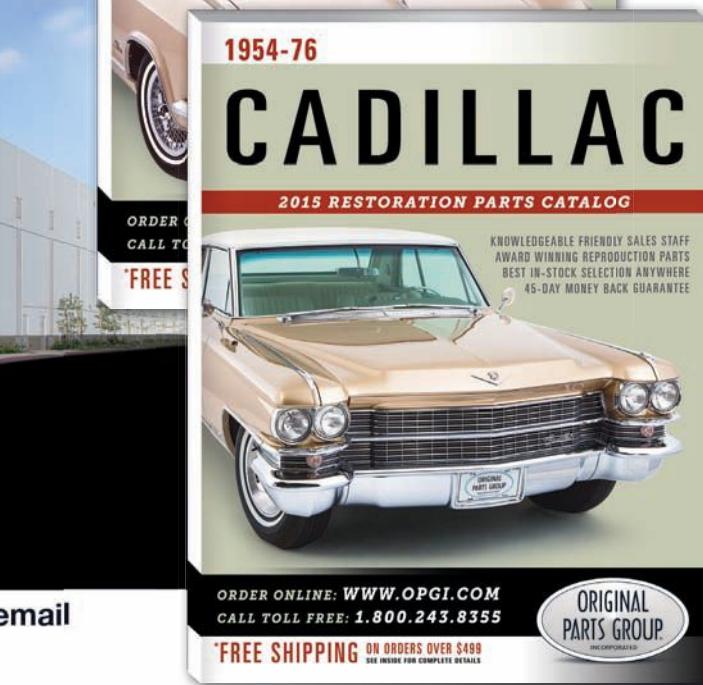
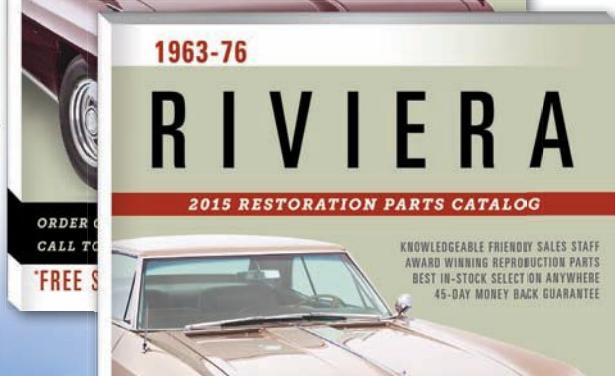
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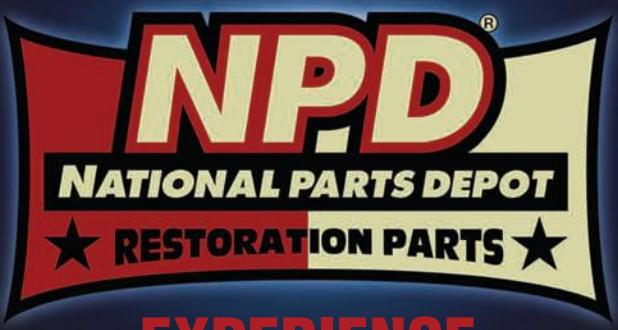


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